

Notes on Psalmody.

THE REV. WILLIAM ROBERTSON,

OF MR. STEVENS AND SONS.

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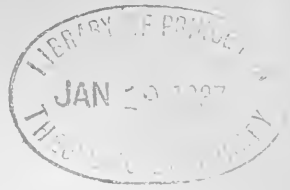
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*The Son: Mrs Coulson*

*with the kindest remembrances of*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "W. Robertson", written in a cursive style.

# NOTES ON PSALMODY.

BY

  
THE REV. WILLIAM ROBERTSON,

OF MONZIEVAIRD AND STROWAN.



## NOTES ON PSALMODY.

### No. I.

Do not misunderstand my subject. It will have little to do with music, but will chiefly concern the hymns to which music has been consecrated. I had, indeed, almost ventured on a separate disquisition on the old music of the Hebrews, by way of preface and explanation of my present remarks; but we know so little on that subject that I could not have written anything very definite, or instructive, or interesting. All that I require to say on the music of old Israel can be told in a very few words. For it appears certain that music among the Hebrews was not by any means so scientifically understood or practised as among the civilized nations of modern times—that it principally employed instruments of percussion—and that it did not assume the varied though definite form which characterises the sacred music of the present day. The musical services of the synagogue and the temple consisted more in chant than in song, and easily adapted themselves to lines and sentences of every varied proportion. Accordingly, the style and structure of the Psalms, so far as music is concerned, are on no recognisable model: there are lines of extraordinary length associated abruptly and variously with lines of only a few syllables: and, making every allowance for our ignorance of the original pronunciation of the sacred language, there is still no doubt whatever that the vocal music of the temple must have resembled the accommodating method of modern recitative or intoning, and never have developed itself in the measured and definite melody

which charms us in such compositions as Martyrdom or Old Hundred. In our religious services a few verses of a psalm are all that can well be sung at one time, but among the Hebrews several psalms or entire compositions were generally chanted; and there is every reason to believe that the “hymn” which our Saviour and His disciples sung after the institution of the Lord’s Supper, consisted of Psalms cxv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., these comprising the sacred song which was usually sung after the observance of the Passover.\* No one who is aware of this custom of the Jews can peruse these psalms without being much impressed with the rich appropriateness and significance of that hymn as sung at the celebration of the last of the Passovers of the Law.

But although the sacred music of the Hebrews was merely a sonorous intoning of the psalm, in which a very artless melody was followed, such as is practised still by the modern Jews, it is evident that they had also a music of a more artistic and definite character. The performance of David on his harp before Saul must have been of a high class, and probably was distinguished by the art and pathos of its melody. This, however, was not the characteristic of the sacred music of the Hebrews. Their instruments were, for the most part, monotonous, clashing, and noisy; and even the finest effect of the two hundred thousand musicians who, Josephus is supposed to allege,† were at the dedication of Solo-

\* Buxtorff Lex., &c., &c. † Antiq. Jud. viii 3.

mon's temple must have depended only on a mechanical adjustment of *time*, and would probably have been offensive and unmusical to a modern European. To this day the music of the East retains a similar character, and the reader may find a very favourable specimen of it in the chant of the Yezidi priests, printed in the Appendix to Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*. An oriental ear, however, can alone enjoy oriental music. To us it is monotonous and harsh, and fails to produce, in general, any fine effect. But the effect on natives of the east, is rapturous. The Arabian servant of Niebuhr, who had listened to the finest music of Europe, no sooner heard Arabic music, than he cried out, in contempt of the other: "By Allah, *that* is fine! God bless you."\*

In the Christian Church from the first, psalmody formed an important part of divine service. Our Lord's example gave authority and sanction to the continuance of the ancient practice; and the express direction of many passages in the New Testament gave it a prescribed place in Christian worship. St. Paul, for example, enjoined the Colossians to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.† An unwarrantable use, however, has in our day been made of this passage, as if it expressly required the employment of hymns and spiritual songs as distinguished from what we commonly understand as *the Psalms*. The terms employed by St. Paul have no such signification, and, as every Hebrew scholar knows, have technical reference to the various compositions which make up "The Psalms of David." That inspired book is a collection of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The employment of other sacred songs in Christian worship should be vindicated on better ground, and ought not to call in the aid of questionable or false support. That the psalms of David were chiefly and almost exclusively used in devotion by the apostles and those who followed their guidance, there can be no doubt. Yet

the famous testimony of Pliny\* that the Christians used to meet on a certain day and sing a hymn to Christ as God, obviously refers to a hymn, not now extant, of the apostolic age, breathing the fullness and spirit of the better dispensation, and plainly celebrating the revelation of the mystery which David and the prophets had only seen afar off. Mention is made of hymns of this nature in an early author quoted by Eusebius, "Whatever psalms and hymns were written *by the brethren from the beginning*, celebrate Christ, the Word of God, by asserting His divinity."†

I have still to refer to the manner in which the ancient sacred songs were sung; for this will to some extent affect their significance. In Scripture there are songs more ancient than the Song of Moses, but it is the earliest regarding which we have special information. We do not know whether the rhythmical parallelisms of Lamech‡ assumed form under the solemn tones of the harp or organ of his son Jubal. It is worthy of notice, however, that instruments of music are referred to before we have any instance of poetical composition. Nor can we tell whether the prophecy of Noah§ found voice in musical cadences, stern and low, as it foretold the fate of Canaan, and shrill and trumpet-like as it spoke of the sunny tents of Shem, and the far-extended coasts of Japhet. Jacob, too, before he died, gathered his sons around him, and, in the stately mood of sacred song, foretold what should befall them in the latter days;|| yet we know not whether the voice of the old man was soft and slow in his "blessings on the head of him who was separated from his brethren," and high and sonorous as it proclaimed the gathering of the people and the coming of Shiloh. But when the Song of Moses was sung on the shore of the Red Sea, we know, with some minuteness, how the triumph was celebrated. The method then followed, gives significance to some of the psalms, and was practised long after among the

\* Reisebeschreib. nach Arabien, p. 176.

† Col. iii. 16.

\* Pliny, Ep. x. 27.

† Genesis iv. 23.

|| Genesis xlix

‡ Quoted by Euseb. v. 28,

§ Genesis ix. 25

Hebrews. "Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." \* It is singular, that Bishop Heber, who was usually very correct in his delineation of Scriptural character and incident, has imagined that Miriam sung *the narrative* of the Song of Moses, and that the men of Israel only joined in the chorus. His beautiful poem, "The passage of the Red Sea," closes with these stirring lines—how sad that they are incorrect!

"Where now," she sang, "the tall Egyptian spear?

On's sunlike shield, and Zoan's chariot, where?  
Above their ranks, the whelming waters spread.  
Shout Israel, for the Lord hath triumphed!  
And every pause between, as Miriam sang,  
From tribe to tribe the martial thunder rang,  
And loud and far their stormy chorus spread—  
Shout Israel, for the Lord hath triumphed!"

But, however picturesque Heber's representation may be, it is certainly erroneous, for Miriam, so far from sustaining the narrative of the triumphal song, merely led the women who supplied the chorus. She "answered the men," as one version actually renders it; and thus at every interval of the narrative the shrill sound of timbrels, in truly oriental method, accompanied the voices of Miriam and the women of Israel as they repeated the chorus, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." This method of singing, in which one party replies to another, or takes up an alternate passage, was afterwards, as I have said, common among the Hebrews. It is mentioned by Ezra † as the prescribed method of praise, and it is essentially requisite to the full appreciation of some of the psalms. The twenty-fourth psalm, for example, can only be properly appreciated when the method in which it was intended to be sung is understood. The same must be said of many other psalms, in which the

abrupt transition of subject, and the alteration of number and person, plainly indicate the manner in which alone they could be intelligibly represented. There is, however, no affinity between the mode of praise to which I am referring, and the practice of the Church of England, which, in careless disregard of the peculiar structure of a psalm, and the dependence of the meaning on a strict connexion between several sentences, apportions alternate verses to the minister and the congregation. In some cases, this order may happen to be felicitous and instructive, but in the overwhelming majority of cases, it will rather prevent a clear perception of the structure and practical design of the composition. The ancient method took no account of mere sentences, but was based upon the spirit and meaning of the psalm. Many sentences might compose one division, and a single brief response comprise the other. The eightieth psalm is an instance of such a division, for the third verse, with a verbal variation, is the response, three times repeated. That variation is remarkable and very significant, though few of the metrical versions have observed it. The first response is, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." The next is, "Turn us again, O GOD OF HOSTS," &c.; and the third is, "Turn us again, O LORD GOD OF HOSTS," &c. A reference to the psalm will shew the exquisite propriety and significance of these progressive variations, and how much suggestive teaching is involved in the neglected structure of the Word of God. By the skill and intelligence in which the psalmody was at first ordered, there were presented to the worshippers, in the simplest and most impressive form, all those antitheses and significant arrangements which now only occasionally lighten on the labour and learning of modern criticism.

Yet, it must be owned, that among all the calamities which the Jews brought upon themselves by their offences, one of the most grievous was the loss of this very method of praise which had been so suggestive and instructive. After their return from the Babylonish captivity, the

\* Exodus xv. 20.

† Ezra iii. 11.

language of the psalms ceased to be generally spoken and understood in the land of Judea. The people gathered their knowledge of the law and the prophets from the Chaldee interpreters in the synagogues, \* and must, therefore, have failed to realise, with any thing like ancient appreciation, the glorious burden of the songs of Israel. Indeed, upwards of two hundred and seventy years before Christ, the titles to some of the psalms, which in a number of cases are supposed to be directions to the singers, were unintelligible to the Jews and to the translators of the Septuagint version. That version was for several centuries in high estimation with the Jews, and though acknowledging its ignorance of everything relating to psalmody, was used in many synagogues in Judea in preference to the Hebrew. It is from this version, also, that our Lord and His apostles generally make their quotations from the Old Testament.

The transition from the temple or the synagogue to the church was not great or violent. The one was but the healthy and higher development of the other. The Christian left nothing sacred to the exclusive keeping of the Jew. The law and the prophets retained all their authority and assumed far nobler significance in the Christian assembly; and the hymns of the sweet singer of Israel which, for ages, had given sublime expression to the praise of the temple, were still the songs of the apostles and followers of the King of Zion. We have no reason to suppose that these apostles introduced any material change in psalmody. They continued to frequent the synagogue as well to worship as to teach; they resorted to the temple at the hour of prayer, and sought to demonstrate that the Gospel which they preached was the very promise to which "the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come." No directory was given to introduce any new method of praise in the Christian Church; and, therefore, we may safely conclude, that the psalms continued to be sung by devout Christians as they had sung them when they were devout Jews—that, in the public

assembly, the psalms were sung responsively, and in private, more according to the modern method. For St. James refers to the private act of one individual when he says, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."\* The practice of the Gentile converts would, of course, be regulated by their teachers. Now, it is very evident that the excellence of the ancient Hebrew method depended essentially on the intelligent perception which it shewed of the spirit and design of the psalm. It did not consist in a merely mechanical division of the hymn into alternate passages. This might, indeed, be done to the great injury of the psalm; and while presenting a resemblance to the ancient method, would, by its form, effectually destroy every quality for which that method was excellent. Theodoret† says that Flavianus and Diodorus, two laymen in the Church at Antioch, were the first who divided the choir and taught the people to sing the psalms of David responsively. But an earlier historian‡ refers the introduction of responsive hymns at Antioch to Ignatius, about the close of the first century.

From what has been said of the music of the temple and synagogue, which, doubtless, in character, would be followed in Christian assemblies, any one may see that a metrical version of the psalter was at first no desideratum. In the Christian Church, at an early age, worshippers from different nations and speaking different languages, sometimes mingled in the same congregation, and joined in the psalm. Jerome says of the funeral of the Lady Paula, that "some of the bishops led up the choir of singers, and the people sounded forth the psalms in order, some in Greek, some in Latin, some in Syriac, according to the different language of every nation."§ The intonation of the psalms needed no measured lines, and depended on no musical arrangement of syllables. But a different style of music soon began to be cultivated. The want of measured lines became perplexing; and the psalms of

\* Prideaux's Connection; Part I., book v.

\* James v. 13.

† Socrates vi. 8.

‡ Theodoret ii. 24.

§ Hieron Ep. 27.



the Septuagint, the Syriac, or the Latin version had to yield to other compositions. The sweetness of the melody was accounted of more importance than the significance of the hymn. Augustine complains bitterly of this corruption, and acknowledges his share of the fault.\* Rabanus Maurus, as quoted by Hooker, mentions that, at first, the singing of the Church was simple, but that the method which afterwards obtained "was not instituted so much for their cause which are spiritual, as to the end that into grosser and heavier minds, whom bare words do not easily move, the sweetness of melody might make some entrance for good things."† We have certainly

no quarrel with "the sweetness of melody," but are seriously concerned with the evils which an undue attention to mere *sound* and a corresponding neglect of the spirit and meaning of the psalms eventually developed. In fact, we are at this moment occupied with one of the many ways in which Romish ecclesiastics have given to an empty form all the importance and attributes of the spirit, without which the fairest form is worthless. The virtue ascribed to merely ceremonial observances, the fables of sacramental efficacy, are all akin to the fatal error which constituted sweet sounds the only or the chief excellence of divine praise.

## No. II.

THE state of literature and philosophy in the Roman empire had no small influence on the psalmody of the early Christian Church. The decline of literature was even more rapid than that of liberty. Early in the second century, imperial criticism ostentatiously preferred the rude gossip and harsh style of Ennius to the proprieties and dignified elegance of Virgil, and affected to regard with disgust the matchless pathos and sublimity of Homer. This criterion of taste was soon universally adopted,—a criterion which would despise the literary excellence of the sacred writers, and give all honour to the puerile declamation and the verbal conceits of the degenerate Latins. The Christian authors, separated as they were at first from the great men of the schools and the honours of the empire, were not exempt from this distemper of the age. In poetry, in philosophy, in history, in theology, the few works which appeared during the third century indicated the decline of human intellect. An era of intellectual decrepitude began its course at Rome. Its evils were well nigh all

consummated before Constantine was born; and, when the Christian teachers became the objects of imperial favour and patronage, their prejudices against science and literary excellence survived the establishment of Christianity. The vitiated taste and intellectual weakness which invaded the empire were specially conspicuous in the Church, and maintained there, for many centuries, an arrogant hereditary rule far more noticeable and more rarely broken than the tradition of an apostolical succession. In 398 the council of Carthage prohibited even the reading of secular books by bishops; and, throughout the following century, a bitter aversion was generally manifested to every sort of learning, till illiberal ignorance came to be excused and even commended as Christian simplicity. The learning, the wisdom, the inherent authority of the ancient Church are convenient myths for scaring modern intelligence into humble and unquestioning obedience. That obedience would not be so ready or so reverent were it always remembered that, even in the general councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, many of the bishops were so

\* Confess. x 33.

† Hooker v 38.

illiterate that they could not write their names.\* Now, during the whole course of these degenerate and unpropitious times, the Christian Church was profusely supplied with hymns, often of questionable orthodoxy, and always of corrupt taste. They were at first after the form of the Latin lyrics, though characterised by the sentimentality and mental exhaustion of the period; but ultimately the monks amused themselves with the novel task of turning Latin verses into rhyme, and forcing the language of Cicero and Virgil into the jingling cadences of a barbarous dialect. In the fourth century, the younger Apollinaris of Laodicea had translated the Psalms into Greek verse, a work which is still extant, but its adoption and general use were impossible in competition with the hymns, even although the disadvantage of the Greek tongue in the West had been overcome. Some of the early Latin hymns, with slight alterations, have continued in use in the Church of Rome; and though several are possessed of considerable merit, and a few have been the theme of unbounded admiration, it generally suffices to modify this estimate, to repeat the words in a different order. These hymns are the triumph of sound, they are very rarely the trophies of sentiment or intellect. Even the "Dies Iræ," and the "Stabat Mater" cannot abide the test of an altered arrangement of words. These are indeed of comparatively recent origin, being ascribed to Thomas de Celano, and Jacobus de Benedictis, and were not introduced into the Missals till near the end of the fifteenth century; but beyond all question they are of the highest excellence and repute in the Church of Rome. They depend, however, so absolutely on association and rhythm, and so very little on intrinsic signification, that on reading the words without reference to rhyme, we are astounded at the general admiration which these compositions have undoubtedly commanded. And from a review of the period during which the Latin hymns were the most rife, and

the Psalms the most forgotten, we are not surprised at the statement of a very competent authority, that during all that time there did not appear more than two really considerable men in the whole republic of letters.\* The East and the West were in the same sad predicament. Our readers will be startled by the following exhortation on the education of youth, given by such a man as Chrysostom,—an exhortation which illustrates the fatal readiness to discard the Scriptures and assume a manual of merely human origin, more enthusiastic and sentimental, which has manifested itself so often, so variously, so perseveringly, among Christians: "Teach your children to sing those psalms, so full of wisdom, which treat concerning purity of life, and above all others, that one in the beginning of the book which admonisheth us to avoid a communion with the ungodly. These, and many other things ye will find therein, concerning abstemiousness, covetousness, dishonesty, and the nothingness of riches and glory. When ye shall have instructed them in these things from their childhood, ye may, by degrees, lead them to things higher. *The Psalms treat of man: the hymns, on the other hand, treat only of God.* When they have learned the Psalms, they may proceed to the hymns as to something holier; for the superior powers sing not psalms, but hymns."† This exhortation was certainly obeyed, and the consequences were tremendous. The Word of God had to give place to something which men accounted holier!

I have not at present to trace the decline of correct literary taste in the Western empire, but only to notice the fact, as it accounts for a feature in the history of psalmody. It was no accidental coincidence that the decay of classical purity and intellectual vigour was coeval with the profuse production of inferior hymns in the Christian Church; neither was it an accidental coincidence that the revival of classical learning and the consequent return to a

\* Jortin. *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*. Vol. II. page 417.

\* Hallam, chap. IX.

† Neander's *Life of Chrysostom*, Translated by Stapleton, p. 410.

higher standard of taste and thought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were coeval with the rejection of such productions and the restoration of the Psalms of David to their ancient and rightful place. This is a most interesting topic, which still awaits the study and attention of any author combining piety with erudition. Such a writer would easily show that every diminution of regard for the Psalms, as the chief and regulating manual of divine praise, has betokened an unhealthy condition of intellectual and spiritual life.

Before passing to other matters, we may mention that, in the early rivalry which, for a time, existed between the Psalms and the hymns of uninspired composition, it was observed that a solemn and dignified method of praise was confined to the Songs of Israel, but that the hymns were sung with intemperate and most indecent noise.\* And it is also worthy of notice that the council of Laodicea imposed silence on the congregation during the time of praise, and suffered no person whatever to join in the music except the individual whose special office it was to sing.† It thus appears that the silence of some congregations, and the ill-regulated noise of others, in the present day, have both, equally, and with other ecclesiastical corruptions, a clear warrant from antiquity.

The venerable Bede informs us that after the arrival of Theodore in England, in 669, all the churches of the English began to learn sacred music according to the Gregorian Song.‡ And it is suggested that the chief, if not the only qualification of the person ordained about that date to the see of Rochester, was "his extraordinary skill in the Roman style of Church music, which he had learned from the disciples of the holy Pope Gregory." Indeed, this bishop, who was named Putta, retired to Lichfield after his church had been robbed by the Mercians, and betook himself to the congenial occupation of an itinerant teacher of music.§ At this

period, in every country of Europe, music was receiving an attention which fatally interfered with more serious and important studies. A proficiency in the art of singing, though restricted to the poor range of the Gregorian tones, was not only accounted a distinguished excellence, but was regarded as a miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost. The same state of things continued for several centuries; and the monkish legends are full of wonders effected by sacred song. Bede relates with devout minuteness the particulars of a vision in the monastery of Barking when the sisters were singing,\* and vouches for the truth of a report that the chains fell from the limbs of a captive, and that all his enemies could not bind him during the time that his brother was singing in the monastery of Tunstun.† In the lists also of sacred books in the middle ages, there is continual reference to the excellence and superiority of the hymns to every other composition. One ecclesiastical dignitary, in the twelfth century, comments on the inelegance and imbecility of the translation of the Psalms in failing to render them into metre, and refers, with exultation, to his book of hymns. In the catalogue of his works with which Bede concludes his history, among the many translations and treatises on various parts of Scripture, the omission of the Psalms is remarkable, but perhaps it is accounted for by the presence of a work entitled, "A Book of Hymns in several sorts of Metre or Rhyme."

Had the Psalms been translated into the language of each people, in such a form as would have promoted and assisted congregational praise, and been easily committed to memory, it is scarcely possible to believe that the sad religious characteristics of the dark ages would have been witnessed. These sacred songs, by their intrinsic and incomparable excellence, by their piety and spiritual devotion, would have fostered the intelligent piety of the people, and educated them to spiritual wants and aspirations which nothing human could have satisfied, and which would

\* Augustine, Ep. 119.

† B. IV. 2.

‡ Concil. Laod. c. 15.

§ B. IV. 12.

\* B. IV. 7.

† B. IV. 22.

have refused to listen to the empty strains of the monkish rhymes. We have all witnessed the influence of national songs, and have acknowledged their power in the guidance and development of national character. If it were given us to analyse the politics and prejudices of a family or a village—if it were possible to trace to its sources the loyalty of a tribe, or the patriotism of a rural people, we would probably discover that such qualities had owed more to the burden of a song, with its homely and dear associations, than to the force of any argument whatever. The Scottish history of 1715 and 1745, requires its chapter on Scottish music. Now the influence of the songs of Israel dwelling in the memory, and recurring with all the charm of sacred music amid the business of the day, and the meditations of the twilight, would have done in religion what other songs have done in politics,—would have kept hold of the Scriptures, and demanded for the people the whole counsel of God. From these considerations we are deeply impressed with the conviction that there is no subject of ecclesiastical cognizance which needs a higher discrimination, a more sensitive delicacy, and a more chastened and severe wisdom, than the providing of those sacred songs, in which the devotional praise of Christian families and congregations is to find utterance. These songs will infuse their spirit, and their very blemishes, into the religion of the people. Their sentimentality, their want of reverence, their intellectual poverty, their mystical terms, their insobriety of thought or phrase, will all be reproduced in the spiritual character of the worshippers, and even with an orthodox creed, will develop an unhealthy Christianity. The value and importance of the inspired book of Psalms, and of any fair metrical version of it, are therefore very evident and very great. Its special influence for good has been incalculable. The reformation in France, as well as in Scotland, was mightily aided and promoted by metrical versions of Psalms, which the people possessed, in their own language, and which they sung in the

family circle.\* To this day do we not observe the happy influence of the metrical Psalms on the hearts and minds of aged and infirm Christians, who, though unable now to read the Word of God for themselves, and to go up with the multitude to keep solemn holy day, yet nurse their piety in their loneliness, by repeating the psalms which they had sung so often, and which were so eloquent of the Gospel of Christ? These psalms are a well of water within them, springing up into eternal life. Throughout the long and dreary night of the middle ages, the few indications of spiritual life which gladden the wistful inquirer, seem mostly awakened at the strains of David's harp. As early as the sixth century, the disciples of Columba, in the lone island of Iona, fostered their faith by carefully transcribing the Psalter. It is told of a copy which a Culdee had made for his own devotional use, and given to Columba for revision, that it was pronounced faultless, with the exception of a single letter. The piety of Margaret, the enlightened and good queen of Malcolm III., chiefly gathered its power and gave expression to its aspirations in the Psalms of David. In the British Museum there is a Roman psalter, with an interlinear Saxon translation. The psalter itself is said to have been the gift of Gregory, to the first archbishop of Canterbury; and the translation which was carefully inserted tells its own tale. It is known that in the eighth century there were two distinct Saxon translations of the Psalms,—the one by Aldhelm of Sherborne, and the other by Guthlac, the first Saxon anchorite. But it is more than doubtful that these versions were never used to any practical purpose. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, when Alfred entered on his reign. He asserts that at that period there were very few men in England who could understand their daily prayers in *English*, or translate any letter from the Latin.† He was himself engaged in translating the Psalms into the language of his people, but the pious and en-

\* M'Crie's *Life of Knox*.

† Spelman, *Vit. Alfred*, Appendix.

lightened task was unfinished when he died. Old Stowe records in his Chronicle, that "Alfred carried ever the psalter in his bosom, that when he had any leisure he might read it over with diligence."\*

My readers may be pleased to see a specimen of one of the old metrical versions in Anglo-Saxon. I therefore close this sheet with an extract of part of the first psalm, from a version as old as the thirteenth century, preserved in the university of Cambridge. As they look on the uncouth words, the early development of their own language, they should also bear in mind, that these lines happily express the meaning of the

Psalmist, and gave utterance to the devotion of Christians in this land, six hundred years ago. The words still live, but he who wrote them has for ages been unknown!

'Seli beern that nonht is zon  
In the red of wichked man,  
And in strete of sinful nouth he stod  
Ne sat in sete of scorn un gode :  
Both in lawe of Louerd his wille be ay  
And his lawe yinke he night and day.  
And al his lif, so sal he be  
Als it faris be a tre  
Yat strem of wattris sittis nere  
Yat gyvis his fruyte in time of yere  
And lif of him to dreue ne sal  
Quat so he dos sal found feel al,  
Nout so wicked men, nout so  
But als wind yat dust erye cast fro.

### No. III.

AGAIN a long and barren interval succeeds. The promising and royal labour of Alfred seems to have been buried with him, and centuries pass by before any one takes up and prosecutes his pious design. It is now understood that the earliest specimen of an *English* metrical version of the Psalms is the production of Myles Coverdale, whose name will ever be honourably associated with the translation of the Bible into English. In distress and exile, he learned and saw the unspeakable importance of a manual of divine praise, expressing in musical numbers the thoughts of inspiration. Many hymns there were which he could have rendered into English; but he knew nothing so apt for devotion, so universally appropriate, so beautifully significant, so variously rich in all the treasures of piety, so simple, yet so profoundly instructive, as the Psalms of David. Who will not confirm this testimony, and respond to the verdict of our great poet?

"If I would delight my private hours  
With music, or with poem, where, so soon  
As in our native language, can I find  
That solace? All our law and story strewed

\* Chronicle, p. 80.

With hymns—our Psalms with artful terms inscribed—

Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon  
That pleased so well our victors' ear, declare  
That rather Greece from us these arts derived.

The rest,  
Thin sown with aught of profit or delight,  
Will far be found unworthy to compare  
With Zion's songs, to all true tastes excelling."

The father of the English metrical version, was born at Coverdale, in Yorkshire, in 1488, and, like many others of that age, derived his surname from the place of his nativity. He was brought up and educated in the Augustine Monastery at Cambridge, under the care of the learned and famous Dr. Barnes, the prior of that institution. In due time, Coverdale was ordained priest at Norwich, but returned to the Augustine Priory to prosecute classical and Biblical studies with Barnes. The prior was a zealous and acute student of the New Testament, and, with his pupil, embraced the leading doctrines of the Reformation. But in an evil hour, under instant threat of torture and death, the prior recanted, while Coverdale boldly threw off the habit of a monk, denounced the papacy, and became avowedly a missionary of the Gospel in

Essex. He was soon, however, compelled to leave England and take refuge with other and kindred exiles on the Continent. He spent a portion of the year 1529 with Tyndale at Hamburg, and then, apparently for the first time, formed the design of translating the whole Scriptures into English. About 1538, when residing at Paris, he published an English metrical version of some of the Psalms, with appropriate music. This volume, notwithstanding the researches of the Durham Surtees' Society, must now be acknowledged to have been the earliest publication of an English version in metre. The title of the volume is too curious to be omitted. "Goostly psalmes and spiritual songes, drawn out of the holy Scripture for the comfort and consolacyon of such as love to rejoyse in God and his worde." It is evident that he entertained a very humble idea of his ability and success as a versifier, and seemed almost to offer an excuse for his labour in the concluding stanza of the address which he formally made to his book.

"Go, little book, among men's children,  
And get thee to their company;  
Teach them to sing the commandments ten  
And other ballads of God's glory.  
Be not ashamed, I warrant thee,  
Though thou be rude in song and rhyme,  
Thou shalt to youth some occasion be  
In godly sports to pass their time."

I cannot refrain from adding a short extract from the address of this earnest and devout man "to the Christian Reader."—"Yea, would to God that our minstrels had none other thing to play upon, neither our carters and ploughmen other thing to whistle upon, save psalms, hymns, and such godly songs as David is occupied withal. And if women, sitting at their rocks or spinning at the wheels, had none other songs to pass their time withal than such as Moses' sister, Elkanah's wife, Deborah, and Mary the mother of Christ, have sung before them, they should be better occupied than with *Hey nony nony, hey troly loly*, and such like fantasies. . . . Now, beloved reader, thou seest the occasion of this, my small labour. Wherefore, if thou perceivest that the very Word of God is the master

thereof, I pray thee accept it, use it, and provoke youth unto the same. And if thou feelest in thine heart that all the Lord's dealing is very mercy and kindness, cease not then to be thankful unto Him thereof; but in thy mirth be always singing of Him, that His blessed name may be praised now and ever. Amen."

I now give a specimen of Coverdale's version. It is undoubtedly paraphrastic, yet it is not so much so as other versions which followed it, and it has none of those trifling verbal conceits which deteriorate and disfigure so many of them. The specimen is from Psalm cxxxvii., and for obvious reasons I retain the spelling of the author.

"At the ryvers of Babilon  
There sat we downe ryght hevily,  
Even whan we thought upon Sion  
We wept together sorowfully;  
For we were in soch hevynes  
Yt we forgot all our merynes,  
And left of all our sporte and playe.  
On the willye trees yt were therby  
We hanged up our harpes truly,  
And morned sore both night and day.

They that toke us so cruelly,  
And led us bounde into pryson,  
Required of us some melody,  
With wordes full of derision.  
When we had hanged our harpes awaye,  
This cruell folke to us coulede saye,  
Now let us hear some mery songe.  
Synge us a songe of some swete toyne,  
As ye were wont to synge at Sion,  
Where ye have lerned to synge so longe."

The form of these stanzas is cumbersome; but let it be remembered that they are part of the earliest metrical version in the language, and that when they were composed, there were difficulties in translating a foreign tongue into English verse which had not been overcome. The lines now before us ought not, therefore, to be read as in competition with the subsequent versions, which, of course, enjoyed immense advantages unknown to the first. Yet they will not suffer by comparison with the version of the accomplished Sir Philip Sidney, and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, composed during the same century. This work is very rare, and, it is believed, exists only in manuscript. A copy of it is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and has this title: "The Psalms of David translated into divers and sundry

kiudes of verse, more rare and excellent for the method and varietie than ever yet hath been done in English." Coverdale's stanzas are not so smooth as those of Sir Philip and his sister; but they are not chargeable with the trifling prettiness and the unpardonable bombast which characterise the others.

" Nigh seated where the river flowes  
That watreth Babell's thanckfull plaine,  
Which then *our teares in pearled rowes*  
*Did help to water with their raine :*  
The thought of Sion bred such woes  
That though our harpes we did retaine,  
Yet useless and untouched there  
On willowes only hanged they were.  
Now, while our harpes were hanged soe,  
The men whose captives then we lay,  
Did on our griefs insulting goe,  
And more to grieve us thus did say :  
You that of musique make such shew,  
Come sing us now a Sion lay.  
O, no! we have nor voice nor hand,  
For such a song, in such a land."

There can be no hesitation in preferring Coverdale's verses. There is in them a touching simplicity, a deep pathos which in vain we search for even in the versions presently used in England and Scotland; and it is instructive to consider the earliest translation in contrast with the later versions. Are not Coverdale's stanzas, which I have quoted, immeasurably superior to the turgid, pompous and sentimental rhymes of Tate and Brady? Look on the one version and on the other. Contrast the simplicity and the ambition, the vigour and the vapidness of expression, the concentration and the discursiveness of thought, which respectively pertain to them. Tate and Brady have leisure and callousness enough to assume an amplitude of phrase, an exhaustive redundancy of expletives, and a minute attention to unimportant and irrelevant matters, no less incompatible with deep sorrow than with the exquisite illustration of it in the original of Psalm cxxxvii. Read the prose translation, which is correct and faithful. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive required of us a song: and they that wasted us required of us mirth,

saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." There is no adjective among these words in the Hebrew. In the very querulousness of captivity and sorrow there is a stern frugality of epithets. But the dignified and impressive severity, the chastened spirit, the total absence of every unnecessary and merely auxiliary word, which constitute a singular excellence of this Psalm are all outraged in the modern English version in metre. The very name of Babylon is suppressed—that name so eloquent with the sorrowful associations of the Hebrews, and so essential to the Psalm; and the misery of the exiles seems to be lightly regarded by the intrusion of four idle and redundant epithets within the space of the first four lines. In the second stanza, it is doubtful whether the matchless pathos of the Psalmist is more burlesqued by the euphuism which rehearses the *tuneful parts* which the harps were wont to bear when the Hebrews sung with joy, or by the doting sentimentality which lisps about neglect, and silent strings, and willow trees that withered. Indeed Tate and Brady's version of this Psalm is of the same kind with Sir Philip Sidney's, only that the former is a thousand times more puerile. I have kept it, however, too long from the inspection of my readers.

" When we, our ~~wearied~~ limbs to rest,  
Sat down by *proud* Euphrates' stream,  
We wept with *doleful* thoughts oppress,  
And Sion was our *mournful* theme.

Our harps, that when with joy we sung,  
Were wont their *tuneful* parts to bear,  
With silent strings, neglected hung  
On willow trees that withered there.

Meanwhile, *our foes, who all conspired*  
*To triumph in our slavish wrongs,*  
Music and mirth of us required,  
Come sing us one of Sion's songs."

So much, in the meantime, for Tate and Brady, with whom we shall have a more detailed reckoning at another time. Since, however, the first verses of Psalm cxxxvii. are so prominently before us at present, I may be allowed to add that the modern Scotch version of this passage is by no means so felicitous as most Scotchmen would maintain. There are some words

and verses so embalmed amid solemn and holy associations that we almost deem it profanity to subject them to criticism. Many of the Scotch Psalms are in the privileged list, and the very Psalm now under consideration is as decidedly so as any. But even the blindest partiality must admit that our metrical version of this Psalm needs much special prejudice in its favour. Would we, in any other composition, tolerate the rhymes of the first stanza, and the awkward ambiguity of its third line which seems to assert that the harps were not hung at Babylon but at Zion? In any other translation would we endure the exaggerated ellipsis which does violence to one verse, and the uncouth harshness which destroys another? Observe the first stanza—its blemishes are patent—

“ By Babel’s streams we sat and wept,  
When Zion we thought on,  
In midst thereof, we hanged our harps  
The willow trees upon.”

Dr. Beattie of Aberdeen, in his letter to Dr. Blair on the Psalmody, proposed to amend these lines thus,—

“ By Babylonian streams afar  
We sat and wept forlorn,  
When Zion we thought on; our harps  
On willow-boughs were borne.”

With due regard to the author of the Hermit, I prefer our own version with all its faults to his amendment. The best metrical translation of this passage is probably that of the Glassites, which in general is a mere revision of the modern Scotch Psalms,

“ By Babel’s streams we sat, and wept  
When we on Zion thought,  
On willows, we in sorrow hung  
The harps we thence had brought.”

To return, however, to the early English versions. I have no reason to believe that the ghostly Psalms of Myles Coverdale were ever in general use in England. But, beyond all doubt, they called attention to the possibility and the importance of an English metrical translation, and most materially contributed to the speedy attainment of that object. It is not generally known or appreciated how much the progress of the Reformation

associated with itself not only the translation of the Bible into the vulgar tongue, but the providing of English metrical Psalms for the use of the people. Within a few years after the publication of Coverdale’s “little book,” several entire versions of the Psalms in English metre were composed. Before adverting to these, I ought to mention, however, that this was a task which engaged the study of royalty, and that there is preserved a version of the fourteenth Psalm, the work of Queen Elizabeth. On various accounts, it is sufficiently curious to deserve a place in my notes.

“ Fooles, that true fayth yet never had,  
Sayth in their harts, there is no God!  
Fythly they are in their practyse,  
Of them not one is godly wyse.  
From heaven the Lorde on man did loke.  
To know what wayes he undertoke:  
All they were vague and went a straye,  
Not one he founde in the ryght waye  
In hart and tunge have they deceyte  
The lypes throwe fourth a poysoned bayte:  
Their myndes are mad, their mouthes are wode,  
And swift they be in shedynge blode:  
So blynd they are, no truth they knowe,  
No feare of God in them wyll growe,” &c. &c.

About the same period, Parker, who afterwards was Archbishop of Canterbury, composed a metrical version of the Book of Psalms. He did so when in exile, and found much happiness and comfort in the task. Warton states, that one of Parker’s designs in composing his version was to supply the people, whose predilection for psalmody could not be suppressed, with a national and proper translation. His version was printed, but never published; and it is not certain that there are more than three copies of the work now in existence. It is easy to account for its never being in general use, as the version of Sternhold and Hopkins was soon received by authority both in Scotland and England. Parker’s version is of very varied worth—sometimes it is abrupt and obscure, at other times, singularly simple and perspicuous. In some psalms it encumbers itself with an undignified profusion of rhymes, and in such cases the meaning is generally doubtful, and seemingly inferior in importance to the sound. In other psalms, however, the language is faultless, the rhyme simple,



and the diction forcible and plain. The following lines from Psalm xix. are an illustration of the Archbishop's inferior style:—

"No specke or tong—to them doth 'long  
theyr voyce distinct not hard  
To magnifie—theyr Lord so bie  
by languages regard.

But yet theyr sound—as wordes rebound,  
on all the earth it strays  
To farther cost; all uttermost  
theyr noyse theyr maker prayse."

My readers will not regret to compare the same passage in the version of Robert Crowley, published in 1549, the only known copy of which is in Brazen-Nose College, Oxford.

"They have no maner of language,  
nor wordes sowndyng wyth noyse;  
They speake not as men use to speake  
no man doeth heare theyr voyce.

Yet went theyr rule throughout ye world  
all men have heard theyr sounde  
And theyr wordes went unto the coastes  
of all the worlde so rownde."

This comparison is much to the disadvantage of the Archbishop: but I now give a specimen of his better style:—

#### PSALM XCII.

"A joyfull thyng to man it is  
The Lord to celebrate,  
To thy good name, O God, so hye,  
Due laudes to modulate,

To preach and shew thy gentleness,  
In early mornyng lyght,  
Thy truth of worde to testifie,  
Ail whole by length of nyght.

Upon the psalme, the decachord,  
Upon the pleasant lute,  
On sounding, good, sweete instruments,  
With shaumes, with harpe, with flute.

For thou hast joyed my fearefull hart,  
O Lord, thy workes to see,  
And I with prayse will just rejoyce  
These handy workes of thee.

How glorious, O blessed Lord  
Be these, the actes of thine!  
Thy thoughts be depe, thy counsayls hye,  
Inscrutable, devyne!"

In my sketch of Psalmody, I have arrived at the date of the compilation of the first authorised version in Great Britain. It deserves to be more minutely told than the mere conclusion of an article would allow. I therefore reserve it for another chapter.

#### No. IV.

IN the preface to Wynton's Chronicle, a Scottish metrical version of the Psalms in manuscript of the fifteenth century is said to be in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: but I am unable to offer any specimen of this version. It is certain, however, that about 1540 a metrical version of many of the Psalms was extensively known in Scotland, and was sung by the peasantry to the tunes of popular songs. In addition to these psalms, many religious odes were circulated, which were adapted to the airs of well-known ballads, and often grotesquely retained the chorus and other parts of the original song. These compositions seem to us very incon-

gruous, and it is with difficulty that we realise their intrinsic worth and seriousness. But we must bear in mind that very few of the people could read, and that the only knowledge of Divine truth which they possessed was chiefly gathered from such lyrics, which were easily learned and remembered. The public services of religion were conducted in *Latin*, if the meaningless jargon, which the priest mumbled, deserve that appellation. The Church had for ages ceased in Scotland to be an instructor. The ignorance of the clergy was scarcely more deplorable than that of the laity. The Bishop of Dunkeld in 1539, asserted openly and "stoutlie" to Thomas Forret,

the learned and good vicar of Dollar,—  
 “I thanke God that I never knew what  
 the Old and the New Testament was.”\*  
 This fully shows that the charges brought  
 by Sir David Lindesay of the Mount,  
 against the clergy of that period were  
 too well founded. In “ane pleasant  
 satyre of the Thrie Estaitis,” he repre-  
 sents spirituality, or the clergy, making  
 this acknowledgment:—

“I read never the New Testament nor Auld,  
 Nor ever thinks to do, Sir, be the Rude.  
 ¶ I heir friars say that reiding dois na gude.”

In such circumstances it was a work of  
 no common difficulty and danger, to  
 disseminate religious knowledge, and it  
 would be now unjust to pass any severe  
 sentence on the methods which were  
 employed; and which, for aught that we  
 know, may have been the only methods  
 available. The song of the milkmaid  
 or the reaper, and the ballad that cheered  
 the cottager's wintry night would escape  
 the notice of jealous ecclesiastics, and  
 yet effect greater revolutions in religious  
 sentiment than the most formal dis-  
 coursings. This peculiar influence was  
 observed also in other countries. Car-  
 dinal Chastillon suggested to the Papal  
 ambassador at Paris, as the best means  
 of preventing the spread of the Protestant  
 doctrines, that he should authorise good  
 and godly songs of papal orthodoxy to be  
 sung by the French. Similar songs were  
 common in Italy,† and the same practice  
 was adopted at the Reformation in Hol-  
 land. A Romish version of the Psalms,  
 in Flemish, published at Antwerp in  
 1540 has actually at the beginning of  
 each psalm the first line of a ballad in  
 the same metre. I may, therefore, hope  
 that, with these facts before us, my  
 readers may peruse with less prejudice,  
 one or two extracts from the “Compen-  
 dious Booke of Godly and Spiritual  
 Songs collectit out of sundrie partes of  
 the Scripture, with sundrie of other  
 ballates changed out of prophaine sanges  
 for avoyding of sinne, &c,” printed  
 about the middle of the sixteenth  
 century.

There is perhaps no melody so uni-

\* *Foxe's Acts*, &c.

† *Roscoe's Lorenzo de Medici*.

versally popular in Scotland at the  
 present day, as the air of “Scots wha  
 hae wi' Wallace bled.” Tradition al-  
 leges that it was Bruce's March at the  
 battle of Bannockburn. About the  
 beginning of last century it was com-  
 monly known by the title, “Hey, Tuttie,  
 Tattie,” from these words occurring in  
 the last stanza of a song which was  
 sung to the air. But the old name of  
 the melody was “Hey now the day  
 dawis.” This is shown in *Sibbald's  
 Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, where a set  
 of the tune is printed under the old  
 title. This title also is quoted by  
 Gawin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld, in  
 the prologue to his translation of the  
 thirteenth Æneid, which was made  
 about 1513. At that date, “Hey now  
 the day dawis,” was a well known and  
 popular song; and there is no reason to  
 doubt that it was invested, like the  
 modern words by Burns, with all the  
 associations of Bannockburn. Observe  
 then, how, in the sixteenth century, all  
 these elements of power were appro-  
 priated by the advocates of the Reforma-  
 tion.

“Hay now the day dallis  
 Now Christ on us callis  
 Now welth on our wallis  
 Appeiris anone:  
 Now the word of God rings  
 Whilk is King of all kings  
 Now Christis flock sings  
 The night is neere gone.

\* \* \* \*

Wo be to you Paip and Cardinall  
 I traist to God, ye sall get ane fall  
 With monkis, priests, and friers all  
 That traists noght in God alone:  
 For all your greit pompe and pride  
 The word of God ye sall not hide  
 Nor yet na mair till us be guide  
 The night is neere gone.” &c.

The first line of the old song to which  
 Gawin Douglas had referred was thus  
 retained by a Protestant minstrel, and  
 connected with new words of a religious  
 character; and in this way all the  
 charms and associations of the popular  
 melody were brought to aid the new  
 doctrine. It is possible that this first  
 line, which came to be employed as the  
 very name of the melody, may have  
 suggested to Burns one of the most  
 stirring verses in his lyric. The follow-

ing is another specimen of the appropriation of a popular song at the time of the Reformation. The melody to which it was sung was what is now known as, "My love is like a red, red rose."\*

"My love murnis for me, for me,  
My love that murnis for me,  
I am not kinde, hes not in minde,  
My love that murnis for me.

Quha is my love but God above,  
Quhilk all the world hes wrought?  
The King of blisse my love He is,  
Full deir he hes me bocht.

His precious blude He shed on rude,  
That was to make us free.  
Tbis shall I preve, by Godis leve,  
That sair my love murnis for me."

Every one will see at once that these verses are a devoutly-intended parody of an old song, and that several lines are retained without alteration. The same thing is equally obvious in the following "gude and godly ballad," which is more dramatical in its structure.

"Quho is at my windo? who? who?  
Goe from my windo: goe! goe!  
Quha calles there so like ane stranger?  
Goe from my window, goe!

Lord, I am heir, ane wratched mortall,  
That for thy mercie dois crie and call,  
Unto thee my Lord celestiall.  
See who is at my window, who?

How dare thou for mercie crie,  
Sa lang in sinne as thou dois lye?  
Mercie to have, thou art not worthie;  
Goe from my window, goe!

\* \* \* \* \*

O Lord, I have offended thee,  
Excuse thereof there can nane be,  
I have followed them that sa teiched me.  
See quho is at my window, quho?

Nay, I call thee noght fra my doore, I wis  
Like a stranger that unknawin is;  
Thou art my brother and my will it is,  
In at my doore that thou go.

With right humble hert, Lord, I thee pray,  
Thy comfort and grace obtaine I may;  
Shaw me the path and ready way  
In at thy doore for to go." &c., &c.

In some instances the chorus of the original song which has been retained is almost fatal to the serious burden of the composition. Are not the advantages of

\* *Sibbald's Chronicle*, III. 274.

a popular melody as a medium for communicating knowledge, rather dearly bought when such empty and meaningless sounds as the following are associated with it?

"The paip, that pagane full of pryde,  
Hee hes us blinded lang,  
For where the blind the blind doe gyde,  
No wonder both gae wrang.  
Of all iniquitie,  
Like prince and king hee led the ring.

*Hay trix, trim goe trix, under the gre ene-wood-tree.*

But his abomination  
The Lord hes brocht to light,  
His popish pride and three-fald crowne  
Almaist hes lost their licht.  
His plake pardones are bot lurdons  
Of all iniquitie.

*Hay trix, trim goe trix, under the greene-wood-tree.*

The popular Scottish melody, "I'll never leave thee," was, three hundred years ago, the tune of a "gude and godly ballad."\*

"All my Love, leif me not,  
Leif me not, leif me not,  
All my Love, leif me not,  
Thus mine alone.  
With ane burden on my backe,  
I may not beir it, I am so weak,  
Love, this burding from me take  
Or else I am gone!

With sinnes I am laden sair,  
Leif me not, leif me not,  
With sinnes I am laden sair,  
Leif me not alone.  
I pray thee, Lord, therefore,  
Keepe not my sinnes in store,  
Loose mee or I be forlore,  
And heir my mone." &c., &c.

These specimens are amply sufficient for my present purpose. They are by no means the most remarkable or peculiar compositions of their kind which I could give, but they satisfactorily show one of the chief methods adopted in the early part of the sixteenth century, for the instruction of the people. In passing, I cannot refrain from mentioning that these sacred ballads also vindicate the antiquity of some of those Scottish melodies which have been ascribed to modern composers. The songs were mingled with the Psalms, and were at first brought by stealth into Scotland. With the advancing light and intelligence of the Reformation the songs were

\* Sibbald and Stenhouse.

laid aside. But the influence which the Psalms and ballads exercised in this country can only be properly told in the very words of the historian. "As for the *more particulare means* whereby many in Scotland got some knowledge of God's trueth, in the time of great darkness, there were some books sett out, such as Sir David Lindesay his poesie upon the Foure Monarchies, wherein many other treatises are contained, opening up the abuses among the Clergie at that tyme; Wedderburn's Psalmes and Godlie Ballads, changeing many of the old Popish Songs unto Godlie purposes, &c."\* These compositions were greedily committed to memory. Travelling merchants carried copies of the Psalms and Ballads as part of their wares, and sold them in every village. About 1570, James Melville states that a travelling chapman had been in use to bring copies of these compositions to Montrose. "He showed me first Wedderburn's Songs, whereof I learned diverse *par-cueir* (by heart) with great diversitie of tunes." This was "the Booke of Godly and Spiritual Songs," from which I have made the preceding quotations, and which also contains a considerable number of the Psalms in metre. It is time however, to learn something of the authors of the rare volume.

Under the year 1541, Calderwood records that John Wedderburn, a priest in Dundee, professed the Reformed religion, and was obliged consequently to take refuge in "Almaine, where he heard Luther and Melancthon, and became very fervent and zealous. He translated manie of Luther's dytements into Scottish meeter, and the Psalmes of David." This man and his brothers James and Robert were all distinguished for their poetical gifts. James, the eldest brother, had been educated at St. Leonard's College, and was well instructed in Latin and Philosophy. For several years he resided in France, where he was successful as a merchant, and on his return to Scotland was much enlightened on the religious contro-

versies of the age by James Hewat, a Dominican friar of Dundee, who seems to have secretly held the doctrines of the Reformation. James Wedderburn, we are told, "had a good gift of poesie, and made diverse comedeis and tragedies in the Scottish tongue, wherein he nipped the abusses and superstition of the time. He composed, in forme of tragedie, the beheading of John the Baptist, which was acted at the West Port of Dundie, wherin he carped roughlie the abusses and corruptions of the Papists."\* We are, therefore, not surprised that he had again to leave Scotland. Robert, the youngest brother, was the most learned and accomplished of the family. He was vicar of Dundee, but went to Paris and associated chiefly with the Reformers of his own nation, who had taken refuge there. It was not till the death of Cardinal Beaton, that he returned to Scotland. "He turned the tunes and tenour of many profane ballads into godlie songs and hymns, which were called the Psalmes of Dundie; whereby he stirred up the affections of many."† It is known, however, that the psalms which are ascribed to John were equally the work of Robert; but the version was never completed, and consisted only of part of the Book of Psalms in metre.

We have evidence that these Psalms, usually styled Wedderburns' Songs, were known and sung at family devotions in Scotland as early as 1546. In that year George Wishart suffered martyrdom. Knox tells us in his history, that Wishart was a guest at Ormiston House when he was apprehended, and foully betrayed by Bothwell. "After supper, he, (Wishart) held comfortable purpose of God's chosen children, and merrily said, 'Methinks that I desire earnestly to sleep,' and therewith he said, 'Shall we sing a Psalm?' and so he appointed the fifty-first Psalm, which was in Scottish metre, and began thus:—

Have mercy on me now good Lord,  
After thy great mercy, &c.

which being ended, he passed to his

\* Row's *Historie*. † Calderwood, 1540.

\* Calderwood. † Calderwood's *MS. Historie*.

chamber, and sooner than his common diet was, to pass to bed with these words, 'and grant quiet rest.' Before midnight the place was beset about, that none could escape to make advertisement." \*

The quotation is from Wedderburns' version, but, as will appear, Wishart began singing at the second verse. It is proper to state that this Psalm is one of the very few in that version which have the same concluding line for each stanza, and that the Psalm itself is more paraphrased than is usual.

## PSALM LI.

*Miserere mei Deus.*

"Have mercy on me, God of might,  
Of mercy Lord and King :  
For thy mercy is set full right,  
Above all eirdly thing.  
Therefore I cry baith day and night,  
And with my hert sall sing,  
To thy mercy with thee will I go.

Have mercy on me, O gude Lord,  
Efter thy greit mercy;  
My sinfull life does me remord,  
Quhilk sair hes grevit thee.  
Bot thy greit grace hes mee restored  
Throw grace to libertie.  
To thy mercy with thee will I go.

*Et secundum multitudinem.*

Gude Lord, I knaw my wickedness  
Contraire to thy command,  
Rebelland ay with cruelnes,  
And led me in ane band  
To Sathan, quha is merciless;  
Zit Lord, heir me cryand  
To thy mercy with thee will I go.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou wyshe me, Lord, when I was borne  
From all my wickedness,  
Bot zet I did, throw sin, forlorne  
Of hevin the righteousness.  
Wash me again, and from thy horne  
Deliver me in stres  
To thy mercy with thee will I go.

\* \* \* \* \*

Only to thee I did offend,  
And mekill evill hes done,  
Throw quhilk appeirandly defence  
To me is nane abone;  
Thus men will judge, thy just vengeance  
Hes put me from thy throne.  
Zit to thy mercy with thee will I go."

The version of Psalm cxxxvii. is a more favourable specimen.

"At the rivers of Babylon  
Where we dwelt in captivitie,

\* Knox. Book I.

When we remembered on Syon  
We weeped all full sorrowfully.  
On the saugh trees our harpes we hang  
When they required us ane sang.  
They held us in sic thraldome,  
They bade us sing some psalmes or hymne  
That wee sometimes sang Zion in.  
To whom wee answered full sune :

How may wee outhier play or sing  
The psalmes of our Lord so sweet,  
Intill ane uncouth land or reigne?  
My right hand first sall that forleit  
Or Jerusalem forzettin bee;  
Fast to my chaftes my toung sall be  
Claspit or that I it forzet.  
In my maist gladness and my game  
I sall remember Jerusalem,  
And all my hert upon it set." &c., &c.

My readers will observe that this version is decidedly preferable to its cotemporary by Myles Coverdale.

## PSALM XIII.

"O Lord how long for ever wilt thou forget  
And hyde thy face fra me, or zet how lang  
Sall I reheirs thy counsell in my hert?  
When sall my hert ceis of this sorie sang?  
O Lord, behald, help me and light my cine,  
That sudden sleep of death do me na teine,  
Or else when my enemies sees my fall,  
We did prevail, soone will they say on mee,  
And gif they see me by them brought in thrall  
They will rejoice into their tyrannie.  
Bot I in God hes hope, and trust to see  
His godly helpe: then sall I love the Lord  
Whilk did me save from them that bad me  
schord."

## PSALM XCI.

"Quha on the Hiest will depend  
And in his secret help sall traist  
Almighty God sall him defend  
And guide him with His Haly Ghaist.  
Therefore with mind ripe and digest  
Thou say to God My trew releve  
My hope, my God of mightis maist  
Only in Him I will beleve.

He sall deliver thee at need  
And save thy life from pestilence,  
His wings are thy weerely weed,  
His pens are they strang defence.  
And thou sall have experience  
That his trew promeis is thy shield  
His word of great magnificence  
Sall be thy buckler and thy bield.

\* \* \* \* \*

His angels he sall give ane charge  
That they on thee sall take the cure  
In all thy wayes to be ane targe  
To keep thee from misaventure.  
And with their hands they sall thee sure  
That thou hurt not agains ane craige  
Thy fute, but sall preserve thee sure  
From perils, pains, and from the plague.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quhen thou sall call I sall thee heir  
 And in distres sall be with thee;  
 I sall restoir thee hail and feir,  
 And als I sall thee magnifie,  
 With lang life doted sall thou be,  
 And at thy last I sall thee bring  
 Quhair thou eternall gloir sall see  
 Or evermoir with me to ring "

The Wedderburns' version of Psalm xxxiii. has also its own peculiar excellence.

" Vee righteous rejoyce and love the Lord,  
 Just men to thank their God does well accord;  
 Play on your lute, and sweetly to it sing,  
 Take harpe in hand with many lustie string;  
 Tytle on the ten-stringit instrument,  
 And praise your God with hert and hail  
 intent;  
 Sing na auld thing, the whilk is abrogate,  
 Bot sing some new pleasand perfytt ballate.  
 Blaw up organs with glad and heavenly sound,  
 Joyfull in heart, whilke all the skyes resound:  
 For God's word is true and veritie,  
 And dois all his dedis faithfully;

The Lord loves justice and righteousness;  
 And all the earth is full of his goodness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The eyes of the Lord they doe advert  
 Till them that dreids him with all their heart,  
 Trusting his godly helpe with patience  
 To saife their life in time of pestilence,  
 And in the time of dearth them for to feid,  
 And bee their only help in all their neid.  
 Therefore, my saull, in God put thy belief,  
 Our strenth and targe to saif us from mis-  
 chiefe

Our heart sall be into the Lord joyous  
 Sen we trust in his name most glorious.  
 Assist to us, O Lord, for thy goodness,  
 Even as wee trust in thy great gentlinesse "

The version of the Wedderburns, which as I have already said, was never completed, gave place to "THE WHOLE BOKE OF PSALMES, collected into English metre by Thomas Starnhold, J. Hopkins and others,"—a version which is now known in Scotland and England as "*the old psalms*."

#### No. V.

THE famous metrical version which bears the names of Sternhold and Hopkins was completed by slow degrees, and at considerable intervals. There is, however, much inaccuracy in the accounts which have been published of this most interesting work. It has been generally asserted\* that the first form in which the version appeared, was a small volume published at London in 1549, containing fifty-one psalms by Thomas Sternhold. This is certainly erroneous. The title of this volume was, "All such Psalmes of David as Thomas Sternholde, late grome of the Kynge's Maiestyes robes, did in his lyfe time drawe into Englysshe metre." It actually contained fifty-one psalms, and was published shortly after Sternhold's death, which had taken place in the same year. But there had been an earlier publication, without date, during Sternhold's life, containing only nineteen psalms, and this was truly the first germ of the old

\* Dibdin

Psalter. The edition of 1549 contained many translations which were not by Sternhold, for he was the author of thirty-seven only. This is sufficiently proved by a publication in 1551, edited by Hopkins, who, in addition to thirty-seven Psalms by Sternhold, inserted seven rendered by himself. Had Sternhold left any others, Hopkins would undoubtedly have preserved and published them; for in speaking of his own seven, he modestly says that he did not consider them "in any parte to bee compared with his (Sternholde's) most exquisite dooynges. But for that they are fruitfull, although they bee not fine, and comfortable unto a Chrystian minde, although not so pleasaunt in the mouth or eare." There is also in the Bodleian Library an edition of the Psalms published at Geneva in 1556, which, though a reprint of the English edition of 1549, which was wholly ascribed to Sternhold, is entitled "Fifty-one Psalmes in metre: whereof xxxvii. were made by T. Stern-

hold, and the rest by others, &c." Accordingly, in the early editions, the initials of Sternhold are prefixed to only thirty-seven Psalms.

The history of this version is associated with those persecutions which, during the reign of Mary of England, drove the most learned and godly men of Britain to seek peace and safety on the continent of Europe. Many of these illustrious exiles gathered in the city of Geneva, and there encouraged each other in desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly. They laboured abundantly in sacred literature, and in all their labour had respect to their kindred and their fathers' houses. In their very exile, they regarded themselves as preserved in an ark from the many waters which were sweeping over their heritage, and in their seclusion they gave the greater diligence, that, when the calamity should be overpast, they should go forth strong and skilful to their glorious work. Exiles like the Hebrews, they yet, in the nobler spirit of the Gospel, sung the Lord's song in a strange land. And Britain was thus indebted to their untiring labours for that most valuable version of the Scriptures in English, still known as the Geneva Bible, and for the whole book of Psalms in English verse. In 1561 the Scottish and English exiles made a considerable addition to their metrical psalter, so that the edition of "the Forme of Prayer," published in that year, contained "fourscore and seven Psalmes." But in 1562, under the editorial care of Hopkins, the work was completed, and "THE WHOLE BOKE OF PSALMES, collected into English metre, by Thomas Starnhold, J. Hopkins, and others, &c.," was published in London. The same version was received and adopted in Scotland. The General Assembly which met in December 1562, "lent Robert Lepreuk, printer, twa hundredth pounds, Scottish money, to help to buy irons, ink, and paper, and to fee craftsmen for printing of the Psalmes."

These Psalms had been already introduced, for in the same year the Assembly "ordained that ane uniforme order be keeped in the ministration of the sacra-

ments, according to the Book of Geneva, that is, the Book of Common Order, prefixed before the Psalms, which was the order observed in the English Church of Geneva." And in the following year, the Assembly specially enjoined, "that every Minister, Exhorter, and Reader shall have ane of the Psalmes Books lately printed in Edinburgh, and use the order contained therein in prayers, &c." This metrical version, used alike in England and Scotland, was the composition of not less than seven distinct authors. The early editions differ from each other in the versions of several entire Psalms. The Scotch editions frequently substitute, in forty-one cases, a version different from that used in England, and preferred rather on account of the translator, than any intrinsic superiority. This accounts for the discrepancies which appear in many copies in the initials prefixed to the Psalms to indicate their author. In two editions now before me, the one printed with the Geneva Bible in 1599, and the other at London in 1658, there are fifteen discrepancies in the initials denoting the authorship, though the two versions are precisely the same in every Psalm. It is observable that whenever the earlier edition gives no initials, the later publication invariably inserts those of Hopkins. I may also mention, that this later edition is printed, with a copy of the Scriptures referred to in a remarkable tract, published in 1660, entitled, "The London Printer, his Lamentation: or, the Press oppressed, or overpressed," which makes fearful charges of inaccuracy in the editions printed after the 6th March 1655.

THOMAS STERNHOLD, who projected and began the version, had been greatly distinguished for poetical talent, and, on this account, was appointed to an office in the household of Henry VIII. He retained the same office, groom of the robes, in the court of Edward VI. I have already shown that he translated thirty-seven Psalms, but his version of these was materially altered by subsequent editors. As an illustration of the freedom with which editors amended what Hopkins pronounced to be "the most

exquisite dooynges" of Sternhold, I may offer the versions of Psalm xix. from the editions of 1551 and 1556. If Hopkins

did not himself make the alterations, he at all events retained and preserved them when he edited the Psalter.

PSALM XIX. Edition of 1551.

- 1 The heavens and the firmament  
doe wonderfully declare  
The glorie of God omnipotent,  
his workes, and what they are.
- 2 Eche daye declareth by his course  
an other daye to come,  
And by the night we knowe likewise,  
a nightly course to runne.
- 3 There is no language, tong, or speche  
where their sound is not heard:  
In all the earth and coastes thereof,  
their knowledge is conferde.
- 4 In them the Lord made royally  
a settle for the sunne,  
Where, lyke a giant joyfully,  
he might his journey runne.
- 5 And all the skye from ende to ende  
he compast round about,  
No man can hide him from his heate,  
but he will finde him out.

The earlier version is greatly superior, and has fewer of those peculiar blemishes which deteriorate the volume generally. But in judging of these compositions, which are now the mere memorials of ancient piety, is it not necessary that we remember that they are the productions of an age very different from our own, with different customs, different standards of excellence, and that, from our being habituated to another version, we are apt to regard them with prejudice? This consideration is the more imperative, as certain rude and grotesque verses are generally quoted as a fair specimen of Sternhold's Psalms. Dr. Beattie of Aberdeen, in his letter on the Psalmody to Dr. Blair in 1778, stated that the rudeness of the old version had become even proverbial. This was too true, but the condemnation was scarcely deserved. So also was Dr. Beattie's own sentence, that "the verse is very incorrect, the sense not always clear, and the expression sometimes exceedingly vulgar." It is too much forgotten that changes in the

PSALM XIX. Edition of 1556.

- 1 The heavens and the firmament  
do wonderfully declare  
The glory of God omnipotent  
his workes, and what they are.
  - 2 The wonderous workes of God appeare  
by every day's succeſſe  
The nyghtes which likewise their race runn,  
the self-same thinges expresse.
  - 3 There is no language, tong, or speche,  
where theyr sound is not hearde:  
In al the earth and coastes thereof,  
theyr knowledge is confered.
  - 4 In them the Lorde made for the sunne  
a place of great renome,  
Who, like a bridegrome ready trimmed  
doth from his chamber come.
- And as a valiant champion,  
who for to get a prize,  
With joye doth haste to take in hande  
some noble enterprise.
- 5 And al the skye from ende to ende,  
he compaseth about,  
Nothings can hyde it from his heate,  
but he will find it out.

pronunciation of words, and in the quantity of syllables, lead men of a different generation to condemn verse as incorrect, which was perfectly accurate according to the standard of the age in which it was written—the only standard which is admissible. The poems of Gawin Douglas, of Sir David Lindesay, of Sir Richard Maitland, or of Alexander Montgomerie, seem to us very lawless and incorrect in rhyme, for the simple reason that we cannot read them properly. With regard to the other charges against the old version, it is enough to say, that were a few exceptional lines to decide the fate of any version, the modern Scottish Psalms, of which more hereafter, would be speedily consigned to oblivion or ridicule. And were superiority in isolated passages, which any one might quote, to establish the superiority of the whole version, the same modern Scottish Psalms, and many others, would at once give place to the old version by Sternhold and Hopkins. I may give a single illustration of this.



In our modern version of Psalm xviii., we have the following antique stanza :—

25 Thou gracious to the gracious art ;  
to upright men upright :  
26 Pure to the pure, froward thou kyth'st  
unt<sup>o</sup> the froward wight.

Surely there is internal evidence in this stanza that it is in style at least a century older than Sternhold's translations, and more uncouth than any of the verses by the "late grome of the Kynge's maiestyes robes." Yet, let us also see Sternhold's version of the same passage, which has all the aspect of being the modern one.

For, Lord, with him that holy is,  
thou wilt be holy too,  
And with the good and virtuous man  
right virtuously wilt do.  
And to the loving and elect  
thy love thou wilt reserve ;  
And thou wilt use the wicked men  
as wicked men deserve.

It is by no means an easy matter to discriminate the faults and excellences of the several authors of the old version, for the same hand seems to have revised with freedom the majority of the translations, and invested each with a common characteristic. Yet Sternhold, revised and interpolated as his psalms undoubtedly are, retains some traces of his own individuality, and is not chargeable, to the same extent as Hopkins, with indulging in expetives and paraphrases. He generally appreciates the sublimity of the original, and renders it with befitting simplicity ; and though sometimes less happy in his diction, he never is betrayed into the rougher style of Hopkins. Indeed, in some obscure passages of the Hebrew, Sternhold proposes an interpretation which is always worthy of attention. For example, he thus renders a difficult phrase in Psalm xvi. :—

Lord, keep me, for I trust in thee,  
and do confess, indeed,  
Thou art my God, and of my goods,  
O Lord, thou hast no need.

I give my goods unto the saints  
that in the world do dwell,  
And namely to the faithful flock,  
in virtue that excel.

He also in Psalm xix. is guiltless of

an error into which most of the versions, metrical and otherwise, have fallen. For example, Tate and Brady render the passage thus :—

Let no presumptuous sin, O Lord,  
dominion have o'er me :  
That by thy grace preserved, I may  
the great transgression flee.

Sternhold's translation is more faithful and correct :—

And keep me, that presumptuous sins  
Prevail not over me :  
And then shall I be innocent  
And great offences flee.

The power and sublimity of part of his version of Psalm xviii. have been always acknowledged. We cannot but regret, however, that in such a passage the word *cherubs* is most awkwardly repeated.

The Lord descended from above  
And bowed the heavens hie,  
And underneath His feet He cast  
The darknesse of the skie.

On cherubs and on cherubine  
Full royally He rode,  
And on the wings of all the windes  
Came flying all abroad.

The merits and defects of Sternhold's translations are fairly represented in his version of Psalm xxv. It is simple, dignified, and musical, but introduces several ideas not warranted in a translation :—

10 Now for thy holy name,  
O Lord, I thee entreat  
To grant me pardon for my sinne,  
For it is wondrous great.

Whoso doth feare the Lord,  
The Lord doth him direct  
To leade his life in such a way  
As He doth best accept.

His soul shall evermore  
In goodnesse dwell and stand,  
His seede and his posterity  
Inherit shall the land.

All those that feare the Lord  
Know His secret intent,  
And unto them He doth declare  
His Will and Testament.

As a specimen of the exceptional and unhappy style of Sternhold, I may give the following lines from Psalm xxii. I have no doubt that they did not appear uncouth to our great grandsires ; but on

the contrary gave a satisfactory explanation:—

So many buls doe compasse me  
That be full strong of head,  
Yea, buls so fat as though they had  
In Bashan field been fed.

Of JOHN HOPKINS, the principal contributor to the version, and the first editor of the entire work, little is known, except that he was a clergyman and schoolmaster in Suffolk, and had been “perhaps a graduate at Oxford” about 1544. His translations are by no means equal to those of Sternhold, and are distinguished by an exaggeration of the same faults. Any one who has read the foregoing specimens of Sternhold’s translations will observe their superiority over the following translation by Hopkins:—

#### PSALM LXXXII.

6 Lord, make the king unto the just  
Like raine to fields new mowne,  
And like to drops that lay the dust  
And fresh the land new sowne.

The just shall flourish in his time  
And all shall be at peace  
Untill the moone shall leave to prime,  
Waste, change, and to increase.

He shall be Lord of sea and land  
From shore to shore throughout,  
And from the floods within the land  
Through all the earth about.

The people that in desert dwell  
Shall kneele to Him full thicke,  
And all his enemies that rebell  
The earth and dust shall lick.

Hopkins also repeats the same expressive in successive stanzas, and thus greatly injures the effect of the composition:—

#### PSALM LXXX.

8 O take us, Lord, unto thy grace,  
Convert our mindes to thee,  
Show forth to us thy joyfull face,  
And we full safe shall be.

From Egypt, where it grew not well,  
Thou brought'st a vine full deare,  
The heathen folke thou didst expell,  
And thou didst plant it here.

Thou didst prepare for it a place  
And set her roots full fast,  
That it did grow and spring apace,  
And filled the land at last.

In some instances Hopkins gives a

correct translation of the original, when the prose version in his possession had failed to do so. An example of this is singularly brought out in his version of Psalm lxxvii. The Geneva Bible did not render the passage properly; neither does our authorised version. Tate and Brady, however, thus enjoy and amplify the error:—

All night my festering wound did run,  
No medicine gave relief:  
My soul no comfort would admit;  
My soul indulged her grief.

Now let us relieve ourselves from these ideas, and attend to the true meaning of the passage, which Hopkins gives:—

In time of griefe I sought to God,  
By night no rest I tooke,  
But streteht my hands to Him abroad,  
My soul comfort forsooke.

But while giving all due credit to Hopkins, as the zealous editor of the first complete version, and the contributor of fifty-eight translations, many of which are of great excellence, I cannot forget that he is peculiarly chargeable with any rudeness which has been ascribed generally to the volume. We have already observed that extraordinary and sovereign liberties were taken with the compositions of Sternhold after his death, and we may well be suspicious that the editorial supervision of Hopkins might give to the best contributions some inferior attributes. My notes would scarcely be fair, and my meaning would scarcely be obvious, were I not to quote a stanza by Hopkins, which alone has done much to bring the whole version into disrepute:—

#### PSALM LXXIV.

10 When wilt thou Lord once end this shame  
and cease thine enemies strong?  
Shall they alway blasphemethy name  
and raile on thee so long?

Why dost withdraw thy hand abacke  
and hide it in thy lap?  
O plucke it out, and be not slacke  
to give thy foes a rap.

WILLIAM WHITTINGHAM, born in the county of Chester, and educated at Oxford, translated twelve of the Psalms,

which generally appeared in the old version. He was reputed a man of great learning in England, but was an exile, first at Frankfort, and afterwards at Geneva, during the reign of Mary. He was ordained successor to John Knox, as minister of the English congregation in Geneva, and was one of the translators of the Geneva Bible. In 1563 he was appointed Dean of Durham, but as he had received Presbyterian ordination, some zealous churchmen insisted that he should be re-ordained. This he sternly refused; and it was on this occasion that the Dean of York said to Archbishop Sandys, that "Whittingham had been ordained in a better manner than even the archbishop himself." His versions of the Psalms are generally in peculiar metre, and are not so smooth as those of Sternhold or Hopkins:—

## PSALM XXXVII.

34 Waite thou on God and keepe his way  
he shall preserve thee then  
The earth to rule, and thou shalt see  
destroy'd these wicked men.

The wicked have I seene most strong  
and placed in hie degree  
Flourishing in all wealth and store  
as doth the lawrell tree.

But suddenly he passed away  
and loe he was quite gone  
Then I him sought, but could scarce finde,  
the place where dwelt such one.

Marke and behold the perfect man  
how God doth him increase  
For the just man shall have at length  
great joy with rest and peace.

WILLIAM KEITH, another of the translators of the Geneva Bible, was, according to Warton and Strype, a native of Scotland. He had, however, been residing in England for some time before Mary's accession, and was then compelled to seek refuge on the continent. He translated at least eight Psalms, but there is reason to know that he was the author of others to which no initials were prefixed. After Elizabeth succeeded to the throne, he returned to England, and was a clergyman in Dorsetshire. I have to bespeak special attention to the specimen

which I give of his translations; and my readers will at once see that it has been preserved almost word for word in the modern Scottish version,—and well worthy it was of being preserved, for it is the noblest translation that has yet appeared:—

## PSALM C.

All people that on earth doe dwell  
Sing to the Lord with chearfull voyce  
Him serve with feare, his praise forth tell  
Come ye before him, and rejoyce.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed,  
Without our aid he did us make;  
We are his flocke, he doth us feede,  
And for his sheepe he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,  
Approach with joy his courts unto,  
Praise, laud and blesse his name alwayes  
For it is seemely so to doe.

For why? The Lord our God is good,  
His mercy is for ever sure,  
His trueth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.

ROBERT PONT, commissioner of Moray, and afterwards one of the ministers of St. Cuthbert's Church in Edinburgh, translated six Psalms. He was one of the most notable men of his age, and held in the highest regard, alike by the Church and the Crown, at a period when allegiance to the one was generally accounted hostility to the other. With permission of the General Assembly he accepted the place of a Senator of the College of Justice,\* but still retained and exercised the office of the ministry. James VI. proposed also to appoint him Bishop of Caithness, but he declined to accept the office without the consent of the Assembly.† To show the estimation in which he was held, as a man of learning and accomplishment, he alone was, in 1601, instructed by the Assembly to revise the Psalms in metre;‡ but there is no notice of anything being done by him. He died in 1606, and was buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, where his tomb and epitaph may yet be seen:—

\* Booke of the Universall Kirk, 1572

† Keith's Catalogue.

‡ Calderwood, 1601

## PSALM LVII.

Be mercifull to me O God  
 be mercifull to me  
 For why? my soule in all assaultes  
 shall ever trust in thee,  
 And till these wicked stormes be past  
 which ryse on everie syde,  
 Under the shaddowe of thy wings  
 my hope shall always byde.

I will therefore call to the Lord  
 who is moste high alone :  
 To God who will his worke in me  
 bring to perfection,  
 He will sende down from heaven above  
 to save me and restore  
 From the rebukes of wicked men  
 that fayne wolde me devoure. &c., &c.

JOHN CRAIG also translated a considerable number of the Psalms. He was of a respectable family in Scotland, and lost his father in early life on the fatal field of Flodden. The young man, after his father's death, pursued his studies at St. Andrews, and when his education there was finished went to England, and was tutor in the family of Lord Dacres. After a few years' absence he returned to Scotland, and was admitted into the order of Dominican Friars; but he was suspected of heresy and cast into prison. The charge was found to be groundless, but on regaining his liberty he left Scotland, and after wandering from place to place reached Italy. Cardinal Pole took an interest in him, and promoted him to a position of dignity in the Dominican monastery, at Bologna. Here he became convinced of the truth of the Protestant creed, and by advice of an old monk, to whom he confided his views, he left the monastery with the intention of taking refuge in a Protestant country. Alas! they knew not the snares with which he was surrounded. He was seized by the officers of the Inquisition, and confined for nine weary months in a dungeon. Then he was brought to trial, found guilty, and condemned to be burned as a heretic. But on the day preceding that which had been fixed for his death, Pope Paul IV. died, and, according to custom, all the prisoners in Rome were set at liberty. Those, however, who were charged with heresy were only formally liberated, and were always seized at the gate of the prison and led back to their dungeons;—for heresy is the greatest of

all crimes at Rome. But, in a tumult which was raised in the city, Craig contrived to make his escape at the very door of the prison, and after many singular adventures he came to Vienna. There, in 1560, he heard of the success of the reformed religion in his native country, and hastened home. He was appointed minister of the Canongate, was afterwards colleague of Knox, and eventually minister of Holyrood house. The following may not be an uninteresting specimen of the translations of one who had been long a prisoner for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ:—

## PSALM CII.

19 For He from His high sanctuarie  
 Hath looked downe below,  
 And out of heaven hath the Lord  
 Beheld the earth also ;

That of the mourning captive He  
 Might beare the wofull cry,  
 And that He might deliver those  
 That damned are to dye.

That they in Sion might declare  
 The Lord's most holy name,  
 And in Jerusalem set forth  
 The praises of the same,

Then, when the people of the land  
 And kingdomes with accord  
 Shall be assembled for to doe  
 Their service to the Lord, &c. &c.

We know so little of the other contributors to the old version that nothing very satisfactory or definite can be said regarding them. Thomas Norton, an English barrister, was the author of several translations, but, strange to say, his initials were confounded with those of John Mardley, who also translated some of the Psalms, so that now we cannot discriminate them.

This old version was used in Scotland for nearly a hundred years, and we cannot look on it without the most interesting and solemn associations. It gave utterance to the intrepid and stern piety of the great men of the Scottish Reformation,—it educated the Scottish peasantry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,—it fostered everything intelligent, devoted, and chivalrous, which we revere in our Protestant annals.

THE Geneva Bible and the old Psalms were in universal use in Scotland at the close of the sixteenth century. But at that time, as in the present day, there were persons so discontented with every existing ordinance, so morbidly critical, so desirous of parading their own superior learning, and so recklessly given to change, that they agitated for the correction of some alleged errors in the translation of the Bible and in the Psalms in metre. In 1601 these proposals were favourably entertained by the General Assembly, and, accordingly, general instructions were given to the more learned of the clergy to use their diligence in revising the translation, and Mr. Robert Pont was specially ordained to report upon the Psalms. Nothing, however, was eventually done by the Church. But there was an eager, bustling, and officious onlooker, on whom these proceedings were not lost. James VI., vain of his learning, and obstinate in his proneness to meddle with sacred things and to subject to his sole authority the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland, cherished the project of giving to Britain a new translation of the Bible and a metrical version of the Psalms. It would be difficult to decide whether his pedantry and self-conceit or his designs of kingcraft found the greater gratification in the scheme. The present authorised version of the Scriptures and the "Psalms of King David translated by King James" were the result. The Bible was first published in folio in 1611, but it had been definitely resolved on by the king in 1603. While I speak plainly of his own peculiar aims in these matters, it is only just to acknowledge the merits of this invaluable translation, and the profound learning and anxious labour which it evinces. It may be interesting to some readers to mention the avowed reason for the king's zeal about the new version. At the Hampton Court conference, in 1603, he complained that he had

never seen a Bible well translated into English, and that the Geneva Bible was the worst of all! He therefore intimated his intention of having a new translation undertaken, in which there should be no marginal notes. He declared this to be necessary, because he had observed some notes in the Geneva Bible "very partially untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits, as for example, Exodus i. 19, where the marginal note alloweth disobedience unto kings."\* This had reference to the Egyptian women refusing to kill the male children of the Hebrews at the command of Pharaoh; and the "seditious" note which gave such offence and alarm to the wisest fool in Christendom was in these honest words—"Their disobedience herein was lawful, but their dissembling evil." The task of the new translation was eventually committed to forty-seven men, pre-eminently distinguished for their learning and piety; and the king reserved to himself the royal labour of rendering into English verse the sacred songs of the monarch of Israel. James, however, did not live to complete his task. The Bishop of Lincoln, in the sermon which he preached on occasion of the king's funeral, says that his majesty was in hand with his version of the Psalms, "which he intended to have finished and dedicated withal to the only saint of his devotion, the Church of Great Britain and that of Ireland, when God called him to sing Psalms with the angels." But it is impossible to ascertain what share James had in the version which ostentatiously bears his name. He had avowedly associated with him a fellow-labourer who doubtless was to bear the burden but not the honour of the work. This was Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, afterwards created Earl of Stirling,—a poet of considerable celebrity, and the Secretary of State, who took an active part in 1637 in forcing the Service-

\* Barlow's Summe of the Conference.

Book upon the Church of Scotland. This fact in his history accounts for the universal opposition which was given to the version of the Psalms, which, to say the least, was as much his composition as that of King James. The Scottish Liturgy and the Psalms by the king fell under the same condemnation and met the same fate. All the influence of the crown, and the love of fame and fortune, could not enable the Earl of Stirling to introduce the version to common use in Scotland. Charles I. gave him a patent of exclusive privilege for thirty-one years to print these Psalms, and the king and privy council of Scotland enjoined "that no other Psalms of any edition whatsoever be either printed hereafter within that our kingdom or imported thither, either bound by themselves or otherways from any foreign parts." But all was fruitless. Objections unworthy of intelligent men, contradictory to their own testimony for many years, assumed irresistible weight and authority in the madness which oppression brings even on the wise. For a quarter of a century there had been complaints about the old Psalms. Now, when a new version was offered, it was indignantly rejected by the very complainers, because the people had been accustomed to the old. The Earl of Stirling, disappointed in his sanguine anticipations of wealth and fame from the royal version of the Psalms, was content to be rewarded with the privilege of coining copper money. And such was the animosity which this coloniser of Nova Scotia had stirred up against himself by the various speculations of his eventful life, that death failed to extinguish it, and many a long year after he had lain down in the place where the weary are at rest, his history was unamiably detailed in an epitaph which is still extant.

"Here layes a fermer and a millar,  
A poet and a psalme book spillar, (spoiler)  
A purchessour by hooke and crooke,  
A forger of the service booke,  
A coppersmith quho did much evil,  
A fiend to bischopes and ye devill,  
A vain, ambitious, flattering thing,  
Late secretary for a king.

Some tragedies in verse he pen'd,  
At last he made a tragicke end."\*

But to give a coherent account of this version, let me state that after the death of James VI., his successor to the Crown resolved to have the work carefully revised and completed. Accordingly, in 1626, Charles I. directed a Commission to John Spottiswood, Archbishop of St. Andrews, for the critical revision of the version, so far as fidelity to the original was concerned. This document is of some interest: "Whereas it pleased our late dear Father, of famous and eternall memorie, considering how imperfect the psalmes in meeter presentlie used ar, out of his zeal to the glorie of God, and for the good of all the churches within his dominions, to translate them of new, Therfor, as we have given commandement to our trustie and weil-beloved SA WILLIAM ALEXANDER, Knycht, to consider and review the meeter and poesie thairof, So our pleasour is that you and some of the most learned Divynes, in that our kingdome, confer them with the originall text and with the most exact translations, and thairefter certifie back your opinions unto us concerning the same, whether it be fitting that they be published and sung in Churches instead of the old translation or not, &c." Whether the king did really wish a critical review of the version, or whether those whom he employed were unable for such a duty, may be doubtful. The version bears no trace whatever of having ever been compared directly with the original, for it always blindly follows the authorized translation. It thus gives no advantage as a separate and independent version. The first edition was printed at Oxford in 1631. There are many bold alterations in the next edition in 1636, attached to the Service Book of 1637. Before quoting any specimens, it may be well to convey a more definite idea of the objections urged against the version. Some of these are very extraordinary, very Scottish in their prejudices, and some of them will seem ludicrous when my readers come to see the extracts, and recognise

\* Monteith's Theatre of Mortality. Edition 1834.

the liberal use which was subsequently made of the well-defamed and condemned version.

The objectors, as true theological disputants, divided their arguments into two classes, the one against *public*, and the other against *private* use, and then subdivided the classes in due method. Against public use, it was argued, 1st. This labour is undertaken without direction of the Kirk, or offer made to the Kirk before. Alexander Montgomerie had a singular vein of poesy, yet he took a more modest course, for he translated but a few for a proof, and offered his travels in that kind to the Kirk, &c. 2d. The people are acquainted with the old metaphor more than any book in Scripture, yea, some can sing all or the most part without book, and some that cannot read can sing some psalms, Therefore our Kirk would not accept of any other. 3d. It is a discredit to the clergy and the Kirk that the psalms should be sung in the Kirk translated into metre by courtier or common poet, when there is no such rarity among them of learned men, skilful both in poesy and the original tongue. For courtiers are commonly suspected by the people as profane, because they employ their vein on bad purposes as often as on good, and both tongue and pen against the best of God's servants. A courtier like Obadiah or Nehemiah, is as rare as a wedge of gold. 4th. This work of metaphrasing the psalms is holy and strict, and abides not any youthful or heathenish liberty, but requires hands free from profaneness, looseness, or affection. 5th. The people must be first taught to understand these and similar French, Latin, and hard English terms, viz., regal, vindicate, brandished, &c. 6th. Our Kirk shall be infected with the error of the local descent of Christ's soul to hell by the metaphrasing of the sixteenth psalm, which is sufficient to reject the whole. And 7th. It shall make other kirks call us light-headed Scots, inconstant and unsettled in our order, changing without any necessity, if we will put down the metaphor which was recommended to all the professors by the General Assem-

bly.\* Other reasons were urged against the private use: the plain and obvious meaning of the whole arguments being simply this, that though king James' version might be the very best or the very worst, though it might be faithless or faultless, the people of Scotland, without any reference to its excellence or defects, had made up their minds to refuse and condemn it. And now, let us read together one or two specimens of this outcast and rejected version.

#### PSALM XXII.

My God, my God, why hast thou me  
forsaken, why art thou  
So far from helping me, and from  
my words of roaring now?

O God, all day to thee I cry  
yet am not heard by thee,  
And all the night when others rest  
I cannot silent be.

But thou most holy art, O thou  
that of thine Israel  
Inhabitest, as due to thee,  
the praises that excel.

Our fathers all in thee did trust  
yea, they did trust in thee;  
And them when as they were distressed  
thou didst from danger free.

They unto thee did cry aloud  
and thou didst them relieve;  
They only placed their trust in thee,  
and nothing they could grieve.

But I am like a silly worm  
no man in any wise,  
The object of men's obloquy,  
whom people do despise. &c.

The alleged heretical version of the sixteenth psalm reads to the same purpose as the received translation.

#### PSALM XVI.

8 I have for object set the Lord  
at all times me before,  
Because he is at my right hand  
I shall be moved no more.

My glory therefore doth rejoice,  
My heart is filled with joy;  
Yea. and my flesh, though faint, shall too  
True rest in hope enjoy.

For thou wilt not for ever leave  
My soul in hell to be;  
Nor suffer wilt thy Holy One  
Corruption so to see.

\* See *Bannatyne Miscellany*, vol. 1. p. 227.

Thou wilt me show life's way, and in  
Thy face joy's height is found ;  
All pleasures do at thy right hand  
Perpetually abound.

My readers will observe from the following extracts, that many passages of King James' version not only outlived their condemnation, but were subsequently adopted. The first specimen is greatly superior to the modern Scottish version, which obviously follows it, and yet makes alterations for the worse.

#### PSALM L.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not then  
Keep silence any more ;  
A fire before Him shall consume,  
Great storms about Him roar.

He from above with majesty  
Unto the heavens shall call,  
And to the earth below, that He  
May judge His people all.

Go, and together gather straight  
All them my saints that be,  
Those that have made by sacrifice  
A covenant with me.

And even the heavens most clearly shall  
His righteousness declare ;  
For God himself doth sit as Judge  
To punish or to spare.

Hear, O my people, and I'll speak ;  
O Israel, and I will  
Against thee testify, I am  
Thy God, even thy God still !

For sacrifices that were due  
I will not challenge thee ;  
Nor for burnt-offerings not discharged  
Continually to me, &c.

#### PSALM XXV.

To thee I lift my soul,  
O Lord, I trust in thee ;  
My God, let me not be ashamed,  
Nor foes triumph o'er me.

Let none of them have shame  
Who do on thee depend ;  
But who without a cause transgress,  
Let shame on them attend.

Shew me thy ways, O Lord,  
And teach thy paths to me ;  
And lead me forth instructed so  
That I thy truth may see.

Thou only art that God  
Who me deliver must ;  
And all the day whatever comes,  
In thee I only trust.

Thy tender mercies, Lord,  
In thy remembrance hold,  
And all thy loving kindnesses,  
For they were still of old.

My sins in time of youth,  
Let them forgotten be ;  
According to thy mercy, Lord,  
And goodness, think on me, &c.

#### PSALM LXVI.

All lands with loud and joyful noise  
To God your voices raise ;  
Sing forth the honour of his name  
And glorious make his praise.

Say unto God, how terrible  
In all thy works art thou !  
By thy great power, thy foes to thee  
Shall all be brought to bow.

All on the earth shall worship thee ;  
And they shall all proclaim  
With songs thy praise ; they all shall sing  
Unto thy holy name.

Come, and the works that God hath wrought  
With admiration see ;  
In doing to the sons of men  
Most terrible is he, &c.

#### PSALM CII.

13 Thou shalt arise and mercy have  
Upon thy Zion yet ;  
The time to favour her is come  
The time that thou had'st set.

For in her stones that ruined are  
Thy servants pleasure take ;  
Yea, they the very dust thereof  
Do favour for her sake.

\* \* \*

He from His sanctuary's height  
Hath downward cast his eye ;  
And from the heaven that is above  
The Lord the earth did spy,

That he of captives sore distressed  
May hear the groaning breath,  
And that he may deliver them  
That are designed for death.

This version, which sounds so familiarly, though it is strange, to Scottish ears, is associated with the sorrowful history of the seventeenth century, with the last avowed struggle of arbitrary dominion, and with the expiring influence of a chivalrous but infatuated race. A credit and an honour to the literature of its age—an invaluable boon to the Christian community—the nursling of royalty—the darling symbol of kingly and priestly power—it was in a moment swept from the notice and consideration of men by the jealousy and wrath of an indignant nation. It has dwelt and been at rest “with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves, or with princes that had gold,



who filled their houses with silver, or as an hidden untimely birth, as infants which never saw light." Avowedly neglected or ridiculed, it has nevertheless been the unacknowledged model and material of subsequent versions. And when it has at any time appeared in the world, it has been in the stealthy guise of an

exile who has stolen for a night from his captivity to look once again on the scenes of youth, and then return for ever to bondage and forgetfulness. It has been kept secluded and apart as merely the treasure of the antiquarian and the instructive memorial of the curious.

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## No. VII.

THIS is perhaps a convenient point for making one or two observations about the manner and design in which a metrical version of the Psalms ought to be undertaken, and consequently, about the rules by which such works should be judged. Grave difficulties in the way of attaining excellence suggest themselves, no matter what the prescribed standard may be, and incline us to be blind to the faults and imperfections of the more successful attempts. The sacredness of the theme, the doubtful acquaintance which we are supposed to have with Hebrew customs and language, the great antiquity of the original compositions, all seem to magnify a thousand-fold the common difficulties of translation. But I anticipate that when we practically deal with them, these difficulties shall appear by no means insurmountable, even though I proceed on the understanding that strict fidelity to the original is the first and greatest requisite of a metrical version.

It is, at all times, a difficult thing to make a good translation from one language into another. Are there not suggestions and associations which depend on the very words of the original composition, and which cannot, in most cases, be conveyed in the words of a translation? For example, the orations of Demosthenes in English, however faithfully rendered, however skilfully imitated, are painfully inferior to the original Attic. And though an English version may, in many qualities, approach nearer the excellence of the orations of Cicero, the

best translation will still fail in some fine associations, in the more delicate shades of thought, and in recondite allusions, which nothing but the very words of the Roman can suggest. In order, therefore, to undertake a translation with any hope of success or credit, the translator must possess a very intimate acquaintance with the language which he has to interpret—with the social and political history of the people who spoke it—and with their habits and customs, to which their idioms and proverbial expressions would owe significance. More than this, there must be a sympathy of habit and thought between the author and his interpreter. We would not, on this account, expect a suitable or happy translation of the *Iliad* or the *Olympic Odes* from Lord Brougham, rarely accomplished as he is in Greek literature; nor would we look for a fitting translation of the matchless oration on the Crown, or of the orations against Verres, from Wordsworth or Tennyson. Indeed, the task of translation can never be happily performed unless the translator is able to think in the language, and assume the mood and intellectual habits of his author. But the difficulties which attend the translation of any work in prose are obviously multiplied when the original is poetic. For even apart from the peculiar sphere and spirit of poetry, much of its effect depends on its own music, and on the exquisite choice of words, which must appear the natural and living embodiment of "thoughts which voluntary move harmonious numbers." It is not to be

expected, that all those conditions of poetic excellence can be commonly transferred to the terms of a different vocabulary, where the expression of the same idea cannot usually be accompanied with the charm of the same music. There is, therefore, some truth in the strong statement of an author of reputation both in prose and verse, who, by the way, with all his infidelity, could rarely compose a paragraph without drawing an illustration from the Bible. "The language of poets," he says, "has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible, that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel."\* This represents the labour of the translator as utterly hopeless. But the statement is not altogether correct, as many admirable translations, even in poetry, do abundantly testify. In profane literature we are accustomed to regard Dryden, Pope, West, Pitt, Rowe, Creech, Grainger, Cowper, &c., as justly entitled to honourable and enduring fame for their translations in English verse. The first of these authors has told us the method and spirit in which he proceeded in his work; and his account is highly interesting and instructive. He had made translations out of four several poets, Virgil, Theocritus, Lucretius and Horace. "In each of these," he says, "before I undertook them, I considered the genius and distinguishing character of my author. I looked on Virgil as a succinct, grave and majestic writer; one who weighed not only every thought, but every word and syllable; who was still aiming to crowd his sense into as narrow a compass as possibly he could, for which reason he is so very figurative that he re-

\* A Defence of Poetry.

quires, I may almost say, a grammar apart, to construe him. His verse is everywhere sounding the very thing in your ears whose sense it bears: yet the numbers are perpetually varied to increase the delight of the reader, so that the same sounds are never repeated twice together. . . . The turns of his verse, his breakings, his propriety, his numbers and his gravity, I have as far imitated as the poverty of our language, and the hastiness of my performance would allow."\* That is to say, Dryden aimed at making his translation in the style and terms which he thought Virgil would have employed, had he been writing in English. But the excellence or fault of this rule depends on the manner in which it is carried out. There were many circumstances in the poetical world which influenced Dryden as a translator, and induced him to adopt a style opposed to the severe and literal method of Ben Jonson, Feltham, and Sandys. Instead of merely clothing the thoughts of Virgil in an English garb, he brings his author to England—he surrounds him with English scenes and customs—he indoctrinates him with English ideas. The Mantuan sees with the eyes of the Englishman, and is manacled with his prejudices. But this produces something more than a mere translation—it creates a new, independent, rival poem—it is somewhat of an impudently avowed plagiarism—it defeats one of the most important purposes for which any translation is needed—it is a violence done to the integrity of an author. Accordingly we find, especially in the *Georgics*, as translated by Dryden, continual traces of an alien and incongruous element, and observe, with surprise and disgust, the moral characteristics of the reign of Charles II. forced into the literature of the reign of Augustus. But in the *Æneid* the translation is much more faithful, and in the fragments of a version of Lucretius, Dryden has given us, perhaps, the best specimen, in all profane literature, of a translation in verse. It is, of course, admitted, that if a translation must be in verse, a certain liberty of paraphrase must

\* Preface to Dryden's *Translations*.

be allowed, to enable the translator to give to his work the necessary form, and "build the lofty rhyme;" but, as a general rule, the best translation will always be that which has used this liberty with the most reluctant and sparing hand.

If these remarks be warrantable—if we are entitled to demand that the translator of Homer, or Virgil, or Dante, or Goethe, shall introduce no extraneous or foreign ideas, but provide for us an intelligible and elegant transcript in our own language of the very songs of these great poets—if it be right to censure Dryden for interweaving unauthorised lines and thoughts, and to commend Cowper for the singular fidelity and excellence of his translation of Homer, a work never yet properly appreciated—it is of infinitely greater importance that we be jealous of any unfaithful rendering of the Word of God. In dealing with Virgil, Dryden communed with a poet whose gifts, though in one respect greater, were not so diversified as his own. Pope, as the interpreter of Homer, while he willingly yields him the prize for sublimity, may justly claim a superiority to the Greek in grace and elegance. But in dealing with the Holy Scriptures, we are conversing with no rival for fame, with no author whose faults we may correct and whose omissions we may supply—but we come into direct contact with the Word of God, and it behoves us to regard it with devoutest reverence. The author

of all truth—the God of all the earth, has said, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Now, some translators of the Psalms have adopted a rule much more loose in practice than Dryden's. They seem to regard the compositions of David as only worthy of being named as a text or motto for their own poems, and they set themselves to amplify and amend the work of the Psalmist. The best known author of this class is Dr. Isaac Watts, who makes no secret of his purpose, and shows no misgivings in performing it. He explicitly says, "My design is to accommodate the Book of Psalms to Christian worship. And in order to this it is necessary to divest David and Asaph, &c., of every other character but that of a psalmist and a saint, and to make them always speak the common sense and language of a Christian."\* There is far more in this than at first meets the eye; but before animadverting on it, let me give a specimen of the mode in which Dr. Watts translates the Psalms. It is necessary to give the prose version, that we may compare it with the metrical.

#### AUTHORISED TRANSLATION.

##### PSALM lxi. 7, &c.

Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;  
shame hath covered my face.

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and  
an alien unto my mother's children.

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,  
and the reproaches of them that reproached thee  
are fallen on me.

When I wept and chastened my soul with  
fasting, that was to my reproach.

I made sackcloth also my garment, and I  
became a proverb to them.

#### DR. WATTS' TRANSLATION.

'Twas for my sake, eternal God,  
Thy Son sustained that heavy load  
Of base reproach and sore disgrace,  
And shame defiled his sacred face.

The Jews, his brethren and his kin,  
Abused the Man that checked their sin;  
While He fulfilled thy holy laws,  
They hate Him, but without a cause.

"My Father's house," said he, "was made  
A place for worship, not for trade,"  
Then, scattering all their gold and brass,  
He scourged the merchants from the place.

Zeal for the temple of His God,  
Consumed His life, exposed His blood;  
Reproaches at thy glory thrown,  
He felt and mourned them as His own.

\* Preface to Dr. Watts' Psalms.

They that sit in the gate speak against me,  
and I was the song of the drunkards.

His friends forsook, His followers fled ;<sup>1</sup>  
While foes and arms surround His head,  
They curse Him with a slanderous tongue,  
And the false judge maintains the wrong.

His life they load with hateful lies,  
And charge His lips with blasphemies ;  
They nail him to the shameful tree,—  
There hung the man that died for me.

Wretches with hearts as hard as stones  
Insult his piety and groans,  
Gall was the food they gave him there,  
And mocked his thirst with vinegar.

Were translations like this presented to the world as merely sermons or discursive effusions in rhyme, founded on texts in the book of Psalms, the serious objection which I have to urge against them would not apply. In that case, Dr. Watts and his coadjutors would be openly avowing that what they gave to the world was of their own device, and of no more authority than any sermon, whose orthodoxy must depend not on itself but on its agreement with the Word of God. But in giving a translation in prose or rhyme, of the Psalms or any other part of the Bible, I maintain that a man is bound by the most awful considerations to distinguish between his own discoursing, and that of the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to say that all that the translator has modified or introduced is true, and according to one or other part of Scripture. Are there not countless passages, which if not read in the very connexion in which they are given us, would be contradictory and delusive? Do we need to be warned that any interference with the logical connexion and relation of passages of Scripture will hinder the mind from following the teaching of God, and may impose upon us for doctrines the commandments of men? The very blending of the human and the divine teaching in one undistinguishable doctrine is fraught with incalculable danger, and tends to destroy the sole authority of the Bible. We might as well print all the sermons preached in our pulpits, (and I have no reason to think that they teach heresy,) and supply them to the Christian world as authoritative standards of faith. The man who publishes a version of the Psalms as a translation,

in which he interpolates the text, does not deal with the world, and especially the unlearned and most numerous class, with common fairness or honesty. He professes to do what he knows he is not doing. He is asking men, or at least allowing them, to believe his work to be a fair and legitimate interpretation of the very words of God's Book, on which everything for salvation depends; and yet he has intruded among those words many things which may be wrong, which may give a false representation of the passage, or which may conceal from the humble student, the very truths which the passage was intended to unfold. How is this practice of interpolation or amendment to be regulated? What are the limits which it may not exceed? Strange, strange it is, that extremes meet. The accommodated and modified translations of the psalms to which I have referred, are surely akin to the fettered editions of Scripture, issued by those who allow the people to receive the Bible only according to the sense and interpretation which the Church has pre-arranged. Will no man warn us to purpose against the popery which we hide under our protestantism! A translation of any part of the Bible, should be A TRANSLATION, and not a commentary or paraphrase, and should therefore simply express in equivalent terms the very ideas of the original. A metrical translation of the Psalms, in particular, must be no exception to this rule, for, when used as a manual of devotion, it exercises an influence on the heart and character, greater perhaps, than other parts of Scripture. What is committed to memory in early life—what is sweetly sung in the Sabbath class—what gives

united utterance to the devotion of the House of Prayer, must have mighty advantages in educating the heart, and directing the spirit of Christian life. Therefore, for our own good, for the good of all who love God, let us have, as nearly as we may, the very thoughts of prophets and holy men, to enshrine our devotion and instruct our religious nature. Let there be no interference with the progression and tenor of their ideas. Let us realise their very meditations. Let us learn how they passed from fear to faith, from thoughts of God's holiness to humility and vows of new obedience, from reflections on God's goodness to assurance of safety in the valley of the shadow of death. Let us inspire ourselves in the great congregation and in the sanctuary of home, with the pure sentiment and reasoning of Inspiration; and in following the very associations and trains of thought of the saints, let us try to learn their spirit and follow their faith. We cast no slight or imputation on the attainments and piety of any man when we turn away from his discursive expositions, and prefer, with all our hearts, to follow the unaltered thoughts of Moses or Asaph, and instruct ourselves in the uninterpolated musings of David.

For all these considerations I maintain that strict unswerving fidelity to the original is the first and greatest qualification of a metrical version of the Psalms, and that nothing can compensate for the want of it. In asserting this, I do not undervalue the importance of elegant and perspicuous diction; but such is the peculiar excellence of Scripture, that it mightily helps the translator, so that any version which is faithful to the original has singular advantages for being distinguished by dignified simplicity. Wherever this is not the case, the failure is unpardonable. A metrical version of the Psalms should therefore, in its fidelity, be likewise characterised by the total absence of complicated construction, by simplicity of expression, by severe purity of phrase, by musical cadence, by accuracy of rhyme. So thought Milton, who has given us superior specimens of what he considered

befitting, and who, in some of his translations, was even careful to mark every word which is not expressly represented in the original. In the following quotation, the unauthorised words are printed in italics, and we have an example of the value of fidelity. What a contrast do these verses make to the rude and unintelligible rhymes of our modern edition!—

PSALM LXXXIV. 4.

Happy, who in thy house reside,  
Where Thee they ever praise;  
Happy, whose strength in Thee doth bide,  
And in their heart Thy ways.  
They pass through Baca's *thirsty vale*,  
*That dry and barren ground*,  
As through a fruitful watery dale,  
Where springs and showers abound.

It also seems obvious, that a metrical version of the Psalms should exhibit considerable variety of metre, suited in every case to the peculiar spirit and tone of the Psalm. No man of correct taste will allow, that the same metre which is suitable for the thirty-eighth Psalm can be equally well adapted for the ninety-sixth. The one is a wail of deep distress, the other is a shout of rejoicing. Even in individual Psalms, where the spirit of the composition is altered, where the author passes from sadness to serenity, from the depths of affliction to faith and hope, as in the hundred and second, it might be an advantage were a corresponding change observed in the measure. Such a change is always observable in the original. This variety of metre would lead to a higher proficiency in sacred music than this country has ever yet reached, would force into attention the necessity of selecting appropriate tunes, and would ultimately prevent the merely mechanical adaptation of music, which, even by preceptors of skill, so often offends the intelligence and taste of educated worshippers.

But if it be so difficult a thing to make a faithful translation of the works of Greece and Rome, with whose literature we can become familiar as with household words—if such a man as Dryden often found it necessary to leave his author behind him, and such a man as Pope thought it expedient to adorn his original,—is it possible that a faithful version

can be obtained of the far nobler poetry of Asaph and David, composed in a language known only to a few, and the very pronunciation of which has been lost for two thousand years? True it is, that the sacred songs of Israel are immeasurably superior in thought and diction to all others—true it is, that the Hebrew language is almost the peculiar study of the more learned ecclesiastic and antiquarian—true it is, that the Hebrew will never again be a living language, for the development of truth passes not backwards to the exclusive privileges of a single nation, but onwards as tidings of great joy to all people; but it is also true, that it is a far easier matter to translate literally from the Hebrew than from the classical authors of Greece or Rome. The circumlocution and paraphrase which often are indispensable in translating the latter, are rarely required in the interpretation of Hebrew. The quotation just given from Milton is a fair instance of this truth, and shows that a strictly literal translation is excellent and easy. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were not intended only for the study of the sons of Abraham, but were to instruct all people and kindreds and tongues, and therefore we find, that the language in which they were composed possesses facilities for being translated, which are unknown to any other. The Greek of the New Testament is profusely leavened with the same element, and Hebraisms abound in all the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. Such also is the facility with which even Hebrew idioms can pass unresolved into other languages, that we trace them in all the modern speech of Christendom, but find them chiefly abounding where the Word of God has free course. Our own language, in particular, has been enriched and adorned by our version of the Bible, which happily imitates the simple majesty of the original, and, in general, adopts without change the Hebrew forms of expression. No reader is perplexed by them. No reader asks for a learned explanation of the meaning of the children of God, or of the significance of the future tense in the commandments on the two

tables of stone. These views are admirably stated by Addison. He remarks that “there is a certain coldness and indifference in the phrases of our European languages when they are compared with the Oriental forms of speech; and it happens very luckily that the Hebrew idioms run into the English tongue with a particular grace and beauty. Our language has received innumerable elegancies and improvements from that infusion of Hebraisms which are derived to it out of the poetical passages in holy writ. They give a force and energy to our expression, warm and animate our language, and convey our thoughts in more ardent and intense phrases, than any that are to be met with in our own tongue. There is something so pathetic in this kind of diction that it often sets the mind in a flame, and makes our hearts burn within us. How cold and dead does a prayer appear that is composed in the most elegant and polite forms of speech, which are natural to our tongue, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase which may be drawn from the sacred writings! It has been said, by some of the ancients, that if the gods were to talk with men, they would certainly speak in Plato’s style; but I think we may say with justice, that when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style as in that of the Holy Scriptures.

“If any one would judge of the beauties of poetry that are to be met with in the Divine writings, and examine how kindly the Hebrew manners of speech mix and incorporate with the English language; after having perused the Book of Psalms, let him read a literal translation of Horace or Pindar. He will find, in these two last, such an absurdity and confusion of style, with such a comparative poverty of imagination, as will make him very sensible of what I have been here advancing.”\*

Thus we see, that what at first seemed insuperable obstacles to a faithful and beautiful translation of the Psalms, are only imaginary. For it is practically found, that the Hebrew songs of David

\* *Spectator*, No. 406.

are far more easily translated than the lyrics of Rome. For as God prepared Moses for the great work of delivering and governing the Hebrews, by a royal education, and all the wisdom and arts of the Egyptians—so did He prepare a language in which Moses and the prophets

should record His will—a language which, as it was to bear eternal truth, not only to the Hebrews but to all men, should be characterised by an unparalleled power, a divine facility of being faithfully translated into every dialect of human speech.

#### NO. VIII.—SELAH.

YES, Selah! I cannot well avoid making a few remarks upon this awkward and mysterious word. For it is scrupulously retained in some English metrical versions, a specimen of which I shall immediately quote. But I may also mention, that I have heard a reverend doctor repeat the word more than once in public prayer with peculiar emphasis and unction, as if it gave clear and forcible utterance to his thoughts. What meaning he attached to it I cannot tell. To return, however, to instances in which Selah is actually retained in English metrical versions, I select two passages from "The Psalms of David in metre, by George Scott, Gentleman; diligently compared with the original text, &c.:—Edinburgh, 1768."

##### PSALM XX.

O may the Lord of hosts thee hear  
In time of trouble sore!  
The name of Jacob's God so dear,  
Defend thee more and more!

O may He from the sanctuary  
Help send thee and comfort;  
And from Sion may the Most High  
Thee strengthen and support!

May thy offerings remembered be  
By the Lord Jehovah;  
And thy burnt sacrifice, may He  
Accept of it. Selah.

According to thy heart's desires,  
Lord grant it to thy will;  
And all thy counsel thou requires  
May He to thee fulfil, &c.

##### PSALM XXI.

In thy great strength, O Lord, the King  
Shall joyful be and glad:  
In thy salvation he shall sing,  
Rejoice and not be sad.

To him, his heart's desire thou gave,  
And didest not withdraw  
Thy ear from him, but did receive  
His lip's request. Selah.

Thou prevents him with blessings great  
Of goodness which endure;  
A crown of pure gold thou in state  
On his head sets secure, &c.

These quotations are fair specimens of the version from which they are taken. They are destitute of any redeeming quality: and even the unmeaning and almost ludicrous interposition of Selah can scarcely deteriorate a version which otherwise is so poor, ungrammatical and rude.

But it is very desirable that we should have some definite understanding of a word which occurs frequently in our prose version of the Psalms, though our translators have declined to give us any interpretation of it. It occurs, indeed, more than seventy times in the Book of Psalms, and three times in the hymn of Habakkuk. It is found in no other book, but has given occasion to much controversy, and has been the subject of many theories.

I. Eusebius at one time maintained that it marked where inspiration ceased, and warned the reader that what followed was only of human device. This very extraordinary and dangerous notion was afterwards abandoned by him,\* and has never been received with anything like general favour. It arose partly from an absurd tradition, and from observing that in some instances it introduces an abrupt change of spirit and style. This

\* Eusebius in Psalm iv. and Pref. in Psalm.

may be illustrated in the eighty-ninth Psalm, where there is a bold transition from rejoicing to complaint.

- 35 Once have I sworn by my holiness  
That I will not lie unto David.  
His seed shall endure for ever,  
And his throne as the sun before me.  
It shall be established for ever as the moon,  
And as a faithful witness in heaven.

SELAH.

- 38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,  
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.  
Thou hast made void the covenant of thy  
servant:  
Thou hast profaned his crown by casting  
it to the ground:  
Thou hast broken down all his hedges:  
Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.  
All that pass by the way spoil him:  
He is a reproach to his neighbours, &c.

The transition in this passage is very marked and very beautiful. But no intelligent student of the Bible can imagine for a moment that the words of mourning and lamentation which follow Selah are of less divine origin than the sublime promise which precedes it. Is it because the second part is full of distress and complaint, that we are to think that inspiration had paused? What shall we say then to such passages as the Twenty-second Psalm, which breathes the most profound distress, and lingers on the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow?

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?  
Why art thou so far from helping me, and  
from the words of my roaring?  
O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou  
hearest not,  
And in the night season, and am not silent

- 16 For dogs have compassed me,  
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me,  
They pierced my hands and my feet.  
I may tell all my bones:  
They look and stare upon me:  
They part my garments among them,  
And cast lots upon my vesture.  
But be not thou far from me, O Lord:  
O my strength, haste thee to help me.  
Deliver my soul from the sword;  
My darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth;  
For thou hast heard me from the horns of  
the unicorns.
- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:  
In the midst of the congregation will I praise  
thee, &c.

In this passage, from Psalm xxii., the transition is from extreme distress to

hope and confidence; from agony and helplessness to joy and trust in God. The transition, too, is as bold as in Psalm lxxxix., but dare we imagine that it indicates a pause in inspiration? The distress and the joy were both alike recorded for our learning. It is almost unnecessary to say anything on the theory now under review, but the following quotation will not be unacceptable to my readers, for it simply and clearly demonstrates that Selah cannot by possibility indicate a pause or cessation of inspiration—inasmuch as in this instance, Selah introduces the very words of God to His people.

#### PSALM LXXXI.

- 6 I removed his shoulder from the burden,  
His hands were delivered from the pots.  
Thou calledst in trouble and I delivered thee,  
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder,  
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.

SELAH.

Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto  
thee:  
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me.  
There shall no strange god be in thee:  
Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.  
I am the Lord thy God, &c., &c.

Many passages to the same purpose might be quoted, and will suggest themselves to those who are familiar with the Psalms.

II. Another theory supposes Selah to signify AMEN. Augustine supports this view,\* and it is the signification maintained by the learned Jew, Aben Ezra. But the Hebrew word gives no countenance whatever to this idea. Indeed, the only plausible reason for such an interpretation is the fact that Selah sometimes occurs at the end of a psalm, as in the 3d, 9th, 24th, and 46th. But this consideration loses all weight when we remember not only that some divisions into separate psalms are obviously incorrect, and also that several entire psalms were sung continuously. The 4th Psalm is clearly a continuation of the 3d, and the 10th is a part of the 9th. But one or two examples will best show that Selah cannot be rendered by Amen, as in those instances where it is preceded by an acknowledgment of distress or sin.

\* Enarr in Psalm iv.



## PSALM III.

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!  
Many are they that rise up against me.  
Many there be which say of my soul,  
There is no help for him in God.

SELAH.

Can we believe that the Psalmist said *Amen* to the profane and godless taunts of his persecutors, and prayed that their testimony might be true? Yet such is the effect of translating *Selah* by *Amen*.

## PSALM IV.

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my  
glory into shame :  
How long will ye love vanity and seek after  
leasing?

SELAH.

Does the Psalmist wish that the sons of men should still love vanity and follow lies? If *Selah* indicate any desire of the Psalmist, it must be the very opposite of that which is expressed by *Amen*.

## PSALM XXXII.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old,  
Through my roaring all the day long :  
For day and night thy hand was heavy upon  
me ;  
My moisture is turned into the drought of  
summer.

SELAH.

I give one more example utterly incompatible with the theory that *Selah* signifies *Amen*.

## PSALM LXXXVIII.

6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,  
In darkness, in the deeps,  
Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,  
And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.

SELAH.

And lest my readers should suspect that the *Amen* might possibly refer to what follows, I add the next verses—

Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far  
from me,  
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them,  
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.  
Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.  
Lord, I have called daily unto thee :  
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

III. A third theory translates *Selah*, *for ever*. The author of this interpretation was Jonathan Ben Uzziel, who wrote the Chaldee Paraphrase, and thus translated the word. Many Jewish writers have adopted this interpretation, and

among Christian authors, Jerome\* and Chrysostom† are its most eminent supporters. But this view receives no aid from the Hebrew, and it will be sufficiently evident that the passages which I have quoted to refute the interpretation of *Amen* are equally repugnant to the interpretation “for ever.” How can such a phrase be substituted for *Selah* in such an instance as this?

## PSALM XLVI.

God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble ;  
Therefore will not we fear though the earth be  
removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the  
midst of the sea,  
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with the swelling  
thereof.

SELAH.

This could not refer to a condition “for ever;” for the Psalmist proceeds to declare, that notwithstanding these temporary terrors, his hope was in God, his true home was in the city which was gladdened by the streams of the river of life.

IV. Another theory is, that it enjoins a *pause* in the singing, and that a period of silence was to be observed wherever it occurred. Justin Martyr, Optatus, and Gregory Nyssen,‡ are the chief advocates of this opinion. It is not warranted, however, by the Hebrew, and it is clearly incompatible with the position of *Selah* in several passages.

## PSALM LV.

6 And I said, O that I had wings like a dove,  
For then would I fly away and be at rest.  
Lo ! then would I wander far off,  
And remain in the wilderness.

SELAH.

I would hasten my escape from the windy  
storm and tempest.

It is very obvious that any pause at *Selah* in this passage would be fatal to its meaning and spirit, and, therefore, that this interpretation of the word is wholly inadmissible.

V. It may be convenient to class together several kindred theories which have all been supported by men of

\* Epist. ad Marcellam. † Expos. in Psal. 139.

‡ Tractat in Psalmos, c. x.

learning, but which it is unnecessary to review. Michaelis suspected that Selah composed the initial letters of three mystical words. Paschius thought that it meant "the Most High God." Meibomius and Jahn are of opinion that it directs a repetition of what preceded it. Bythner holds that it merely calls attention to the passage. And Wilson, (St. Andrew's,) in his Hebrew Grammar, pleads for the interpretation, "Praise ye the Lord."

VI. Having stated objections to so many theories, may it not be expected that I should now attempt to propose an interpretation not liable to such charges? In doing so, I may ask whether the older translations of the Psalms give us any aid, and whether the term itself, in the Hebrew language, suggests any explanation? The Septuagint translation, made in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the third century before Christ, renders Selah by *Diapsalma*, or a mark of division in the Psalm. No notice is taken of the word in the Latin Vulgate; but one of the earliest Christian writers refers to those marks of division of Psalms according to the Septuagint, and quotes "the diapsalma of the 47th Psalm."\* And another author quotes "the second diapsalma of the 50th Psalm."† This, however, affords little light upon the subject. Does it explain on what principle these divisions were made? Does it enable us to reconcile the variations between the Septuagint version and the Hebrew text in the insertion of the mark? For they differ in seven instances. One thing, however, is certain, that at the date of the Septuagint, the precise and technical meaning of Selah had been lost. To appeal, then, as a last resource to the Hebrew word, we learn that it signifies to raise or exalt. And from its position in the Psalms, it seems most probable that it had reference to the choir of the sanctuary, and directed the befitting accompaniment of instrumental music which characterized the temple service. It is worthy of attention that Selah occurs in no Psalm composed after the captivity,

when the choirs of the house of God were considerably abridged.\* And it is equally worthy of attention that the Hymn of Habakkuk, the only other part of Scripture in which Selah is found, was composed at a time when the Temple service had been restored to pristine magnificence by the good king Josiah.† The use and significance of Selah are probably indicated in the following description of the festival celebrated by Hezekiah. It shows that the introduction of instrumental music was regulated and arranged by inspired authority, and must have been directed in some such form as that under consideration. "And Hezekiah set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord by His prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar: and when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished."‡ It is observable that Selah generally occurs when there is a change of person, or style, or subject, and where a corresponding change in the music would be required. Some of the quotations which I have already given have illustrated this fact. Is it not clearly indicated in the following passages?

#### PSALM XXIV.

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord!  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, &c.  
This is the generation of them that seek him,  
That seek thy face, O Jacob.

#### SELAH.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of glory shall come in, &c.

\* See Book of Psalms, &c., &c., by Rev. J. Jebb.

† 2 Chronicles xxxv.

‡ 2 Chronicles xxi.

\* Justin Martyr, Dial. cum Tryph.

† Optatus contra Parmenium.

## PSALM LXII.

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?

Ye shall be slain all of you,  
As a bowing wall shall ye be  
And as a tottering fence.

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency,

They delight in lies;  
They bless with their mouth,  
But they curse inwardly.

SELAH.

My soul, wait thou only upon God,  
For my expectation is from Him, &c.

These quotations, and others which I have given, and the remarks with which I have introduced them, sufficiently show that Selah was employed to mark those transitions in the psalm which required a corresponding change in the accompany-

ing music,—that it was a technical and musical sign,—that its precise significance has been lost for more than two thousand years, with many other matters relating to the music of the Temple,—that as that music had the finest relation to the sense and spirit of the Psalms, the occurrence of the musical term Selah generally assists the student in appreciating the structure of the sacred composition,—and that, in these respects, the retaining the term is of the highest value in our prose translation of the Scripture. This view of the meaning and function of the word Selah has been recently vindicated with much learning and power by the Rev. Mr. Jebb, and was of old maintained by Kimchi, Forster, Buxtorf, Calvin, Patrick, and a host of others.

## No. IX.

NOTWITHSTANDING the bitter opposition which was given to the Psalter of King James as uncalled for and faulty,—notwithstanding the indignant and stout assertion which was made of the excellence of the old version, there was at the same time in Scotland a deep conviction of the necessity of an amended translation. It is by no means a difficult thing to account for this contradiction. But the fact was sufficiently proved by the private and laborious preparation of several versions, and the anxiety which soon was openly manifested to take advantage of these. The same conviction was prevalent in England, though there the agitation on the subject was promoted not only by those who sincerely longed for a better version, but also by some who expected that the movement would bring about the total suppression of psalmody in divine worship. I have no reason to suspect that such an idea was entertained by any party in Scotland; and I purpose now to say something of two of the metrical versions produced at that period, and which are not commonly known.

Before setting out to discharge his

duties as a Commissioner from the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Assembly, Baillie (afterwards Principal of the University of Glasgow) wrote the following letter. It is dated at Kilwinning, of which parish he was then Minister, October 9, 1643. "For the right worshipfull his assurit Friend, Sir William Muir of Rouallan. Right Worshipfull, If it be God's will that our intendit voyage towards London hold, it is liklie that on of the points of our conference will be anent a new Psalter. Your's I did iyk better than any other I have sein. If you think meet to send to me a perfyte copie thereof, I shall assure to mak that use of it which you shall direct, or the best I am able. Expecting your mind heeranent, I rest, your loving friend to serve you, R. BAILLIE."\* This request, however, was not complied with, as we shall presently see. The version to which it refers was never published, and exists only in manuscript. Yet it was so well known at the time, that it was not only adverted to in Baillie's general correspondence, but was specially mentioned and commended in an act of

\* Baillie's Letters and Journals, vol. ii. p. 101.

the General Assembly.\* It may be observed in passing that Baillie had a high opinion of the political service which Sir William Mure rendered to the cause of the Church : but though this may have led him to regard with partiality anything done by the learned Knight of Rowallan, he was not only heartily sincere but apparently correct in the estimate he had formed of Sir William's version. Again and again he publicly stated this preference and regretted that he was not in possession of the treasure. As he had anticipated, the subject of a new Psalter was considered in the Westminster Assembly. Complaint was made of "the obsolete version of the Psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins," and the Parliament desired the Assembly to recommend some other version for public use.† In an official communication which Baillie made from London on January 1, 1644, to the ecclesiastical authorities in Scotland, he gave an account of the version which after many alterations was subsequently adopted by the Church of Scotland. His favour for the Rowallan version remained unaltered. "One of the Committee matters is the Psalter. Ane old most honest member of the House of Commons, Mr Rous, hes helped the old Psalter, in the most places faultie. His friends are verie pressing in the Assemblie that his book may be examined, and helped by the author in what places it shall be found meet, and then be commended to the Parliament, that they may injoyne the publick use of it. One of their considerations is, the great private advantage which would by this book come to their friend: but manie do oppose the motion ; the most because the work is not so well done as they think it might. Mr Nye did speak much against a tie to anie Psalter, and something against the singing of Paraphrases, as of preaching of homilies. We understand will mightilie oppose it : for the Psalter is a great part of our uniformitie, which we cannot let pass till our Church be well advysed with it. I wish I had Rowallan's Psalter here : for I like it

much better than anie yet I have seen."\* In the course of the following year, Baillie formally applied to Sir William Mure to revise and suggest improvements on an amended copy of Rouse's version, and took care that similar applications should be made from various influential quarters. He wrote to Douglas, one of the most eminent and learned Ministers in Scotland, in these terms,— "I remember I have seen many years ago a translation of some Psalmes by the Laird of Rowalland, which then did so affect my mind that I did ever since conceive the gentleman to be one of the most fit instruments for that work I yet have knowne. I wish from my heart that more means had been used to have sett him on that employment than now I know can be. Only, Sir, if so yow think it convenient, for truly I am deceived if you mind not this service more than any other in that land : I could wish that either the Committee or yourself, might be pleased to write to him, and send him a copy of the Psalmes which you receive from us, intreating him that he would be pleased to return you his observations thereupon. He did promise to me, at my last meeting with him, that he would be glad, upon a calling, to contribute his best endeavour for that which he confessed did concern both the honour of God and the good of his Church : by a calling I found he understood an invitation from that Committee to whose care the Generall Assemblie had recommended the review of Mr Rouse's last translation."† I am not at present occupied with the history of Rouse's version, which will require a separate sketch, but the best evidence that Sir William Mure's assistance was obtained and that his suggestions were in many instances adopted for amending Rouse's translation, is to produce a Psalm from this version and the same Psalm from Sir William's. By comparing these with the present Scotch Psalter we can easily see how much we are indebted to the Rowallan revision. I purposely do not quote from the edition

\* 1647, Sess. xx.

† Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, cap. xvi.

• Baillie's Letters, &c., vol. ii. p. 120.

† Baillie's Letters, &c., vol. ii. p. 332.

of Rouse's Psalms published in 1643, but from his revised edition in 1646, issued immediately before the assistance of Sir William Mure was obtained.

ROUSE'S VERSION OF 1646.

PSALM I.

The man is blest that in th' advice  
Of those that wicked are  
Walks not, nor stands in sinners' path,  
Nor sits in scorner's chair,

But in God's law delights; on's law  
Both day and night doth think;  
He shall be like unto a tree  
Set by the river's brink;

Whose fruit's in season, leaf fades not,  
All that he doth shall thrive:  
Not so the wicked—but like chaff  
Which wind away doth drive.

In judgment, therefore, wicked men  
Shall not stand justified,  
Nor in the assembly of the just  
The sinners shall abide.

Because the way of righteous men  
The Lord with favour knows;  
Whereas the way of wicked men  
Unto destruction goes.

SIR WILLIAM MURE'S VERSION.

PSALM I.

The man is blessed verily  
Who walketh not astray  
In counsel of ungodly men,  
Nor stands in sinners' way:

Nor sits in scorner's seat; but sets  
On God's law his delight,  
And steadfastly his law doth mind  
And muse on day and night.

He shall be like unto the tree  
Set by the river's side,  
In season due which fruit brings forth,  
Whose leaves aye blooming bide.

His works shall prosper all. Not so  
Ungodly men, for they  
Shall be like chaff, which stormy winds  
Sweep suddenly away.

In judgment, therefore, shall not stand  
Men wicked and profane;  
Nor sinners where the righteous flock  
Assembled do remain:

For, whoso righteous paths pursue,  
The Lord doth know their way,  
But perish shall the way of sin,  
Wherein the wicked stray.

I quote one other specimen of Sir W. Mure's version.

PSALM XXIII.

The Lord my Shepherd is; of want  
I never shall complain;  
For me to rest on he doth grant  
Green pastures of the plain.  
He leads me smoothest brooks beside,  
And doth my soul reclaim;  
Yea me by righteous paths doth guide  
For glory of his name.

The valley dark of death's abode  
To pass I'll fear none ill,  
For thou art with me, Lord, thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.  
For me a table thou dost spread  
In presence of my foes;  
With oil thou dost anoint mine head;  
By thee my cup o'erflows.

Mercy and goodness all my days  
With me shall surely stay,  
And in thy house to dwell always,  
O Lord, my count I'll lay.

I have already mentioned that Sir William Mure's version was never published. Some of his psalms are printed in the Appendix to "The Historie and Descent of the House of Rouallane, by Sir William Mure, Knight of Rouallane. Written in or prior to 1657." Glasgow, 1825.

In passing to the other version which I have now to notice, the beautiful and impressive lines of Cowper on John Bunyan come so vividly before me, and are in some respects so curiously apposite, that I cannot deny myself the happiness of repeating them.

O Thou, whom, borne on fancy's eager wing  
Back to the season of life's happy spring,  
I pleased remember, and while memory yet  
Holds fast her office here, will ne'er forget;  
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale  
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail;  
Whose hum'rous vein, strong sense, and simple  
style,

May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile,  
Witty and well-employed, and like thy Lord,  
Speaking in parables his slighted word;  
I name thee not, lest so despised a name  
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame;  
Yet e'en in transitory life's late day  
That mingles all my brown with sober gray,  
Revere the man whose *Pilgrim* marks the  
road,

And guides the *Progress* of the soul to God.

Alas! I cannot conceal the name of my author—a name associated only with everything ludicrous, burlesque, uncouth—the name of the munificent, learned witty, amiable, honest, pious ZACHARY BOYD. And now that I have named him, and thus stirred up most amusing recollections of sundry alleged stanzas ascribed to him, let me entreat a moment's truce while I try, like a voice crying in a wilderness, to vindicate the memory of a good, accomplished, shrewd, defamed man. The whole Bible in verse by Zachary Boyd, preserved with unusual securities in the Library of the University of Glasgow is—a mere fable. The absurd and ribald verses usually ascribed to him are spurious. He undoubtedly wrote in the quaint and peculiar style of his own age: but if we judge his works by a more recent criterion, he was a more correct writer than Baillie, as he was a more talented and accomplished man. His works commanded the homage of the generation in which he lived, and still claim and secure the regard of every man of intelligence who has perused them. He translated the four Gospels into metre, a very useless and unwise task, and he published a large number of Scriptural poems. Indeed, he was a profuse author in prose and verse, but the work best known among his admirers is "The Last Battell of the Soule in death." This curious and excellent work represents a solemn and faithful conversation carried on in a sick chamber between a dying parishioner and his minister during the course of eight days. Doubts are suggested, discussed, and removed. Mistaken ideas of the Gospel are rectified. The nature and operation of saving truth are developed. The temptations, the dangers, the advantages of a sick-bed are minutely and practically considered. And all this is done so scripturally, so faithfully, so devoutly, so pointedly, that no Christian can read it without receiving healthy instruction, and no Christian minister can peruse it without deriving professional benefit. I wish I had space to transcribe pages from the conversations and prayers of that dear book.

Let me, however, give one specimen, though in selecting *one* I shall immediately suspect that I might have made a better choice. "THE SICK MAN—But I as yet have no sense of such a mercy: while I seek and cry for help, God either answereth not at all, or when He maketh answer, it is like that which Elisha said to Jehoram seeking comfort upon extremity, 'What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother, and desire them to help thee'—get thee to thy pleasures and profits and preferments which, in forsaking me, thou didst so eagerly pursue. This maketh all the wounds of my remorse to bleed afresh. THE PASTOR—As Samuel took the voice of God to be the voice of Eli, so many take the voice of a *temptation* to be the voice of God. We must try the spirits. Satan is crafty. He can wind himself wonderfully into the heart of men, sometimes by sleepy security, sometimes by fearful despair. While he enticeth unto sin, he maketh God to speak nothing but mercy to a sinner. Thou mayest sin, will he say, and repent again. But while he accuseth for sin, *he maketh all God's words to be words of wrath*, that the sinner may be swallowed up with despair. Take heed, sir, who it is that answereth to your cry. Though God should draw you through hell, be ye still assured of heaven. His wrath is but for a moment, but His mercy endureth for ever. Settle your heart in the secret God, lest it be carried away with every light wind and gale of temptation. Seek, out of yourself, in Christ, the grounds and warrants of your salvation, &c."

Zachary Boyd was ordained minister of the Barony Parish of Glasgow in 1623. For thirty years, the term of his ministry, he preached in the crypt of the Cathedral, which was then, and till the very end of last century, the Barony Church. He was a generous patron of learning, a man of no common wit and humour, an accomplished scholar, a diligent minister, a godly man. He was one of the earliest and most munificent benefactors of the Glasgow University. Among many other works, he was the author of a metrical version of

the Psalms, now very rarely heard of, but which, in spite of Baillie, was nearly adopted by the Church of Scotland. And when the General Assembly of 1647 appointed a committee to revise Rouse's amended version, they specially directed their committee "to avail themselves of the Psalter of Rowallan *and of Mr Zachary Boyd.*" Baillie, who seemed to be always jealous and suspicious of Boyd, complains that "some had more regard than needed to the Psalter of Mr Zachary." This Psalter, however, will speak for itself.

## PSALM XX.

The Lord God hear thee in the day  
When He doth trouble send !  
And let His name that is the God  
Of Jacob, thee defend !

And from His holy sanctuary  
A help send unto thee,  
And that out of Zion by Him  
Thou mayest strengthened be.

Thy offerings all remember, and  
Burnt sacrifice accept—  
Thy counsel all fulfil and grant  
Thee after thine own heart.

In thy salvation, we'll rejoice,  
In our God's name we will  
Set up our banners, and the Lord  
Thy prayers all fulfil, &c., &c.

This is by no means one of the happiest specimens of our author; but the first and last stanzas shew that the Scottish version was sometimes indebted to Mr. Zachary's Psalter.

## PSALM XXIII.

The mighty God my shepherd is,  
Who doth me daily feed ;  
Therefore I shall not want the thing  
Whereof I stand in need.

He makes me in the pastures green  
Lie down by His good will ;  
He in His mercy doth me lead  
Beside the waters still.

My wearied soul He doth restore ;  
He also doth me lead  
Into the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake indeed.

Though through the valley of death's shade  
I walk, I'll fear no ill ;  
Thou art with me, thy rod and staff  
Me comfort ever still.

Thou sett'st in presence of my foes  
A table me before ;  
Mine head, with oil thou dost anoint,  
My cup it runneth o'er.

Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall here me follow still,  
And in the house of God the Lord  
For ever dwell I will.

I can fancy some reader reflecting with complacent happiness on the superior excellence of our modern version, and selecting perhaps for special admiration one stanza,—

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear none ill ;  
For thou art with me ; and thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.

Now, dear reader, this stanza, which you have repeated a thousand times, and which is consecrated with all your holy recollections of a mother's love, is after all not so good, not so intrinsically valuable, as Zachary Boyd's. Our version dilutes the passage, or rather fails to render it: and in this respect errs with a multitude. Our prose version, however, is accurate; but both the Septuagint and the Vulgate fail. So do Sternhold and Hopkins; so does King James; so do Tate and Brady; so does Rowallan; so does Buchanan's Latin version; so do many others. The Psalmist speaks of something more than walking "in death's dark vale." He refers to an experience extraordinary. The terms which he employs are remarkable; and nothing else than walking "through the valley of the shadow of death" will satisfy the original. Zachary Boyd saw this, and carefully attended to it. His version must indeed have cost untiring labour—his translation of difficult passages is always deserving of attention—his versification is about equal to that of the Scottish Psalter. Yet his work has been practically lost—his name has been cruelly brought into disrepute—his memory has been wantonly wronged and insulted—his character and gifts have been offered to posterity in a portrait which his worst enemy when alive would have refused to recognise. His *printed* version of the psalms is now not so well known as even the *manuscript* translations of Sir William Mure. An humbling chapter might be written—don't think that I will now write it—on the sudden, violent,

and early entombment of many works of high genius and untold labour. Who, within the last hundred years, has cared to know that the most learned and accomplished men in Scotland in the

seventeenth century, in labouring for the metrical version of the Psalms which we still use, resolved to give solemn and respectful heed to "the Psalter of Row-allan and of Mr Zachary Boyd!"

## No. X.

Our Scottish metrical Psalms are merely a revised form of the version by Francis Rouse to which I have already referred. They are accordingly described in the Acts of the General Assembly as Rouse's Psalms, and are peculiarly interesting as the manual of praise employed by the Church, and nine-tenths of the dissenters in Scotland, for the past two hundred years. But it rarely happens that an honour, so great as that of being the author of the manual of divine praise adopted by a whole nation, can be reached without keen competition. Rouse's success was no exception to the general rule. In Scotland there were several aspirants to this distinction, two of whom have been before us. The Commission of the General Assembly \* not only appointed "a letter of encouragement to be written to Mr. Zacharie Boyd, for his pains in his paraphrase of the Psalms," but also intimates to him that they had specially sent his work to their Commissioners at London, to be considered and recommended. There were others, however, who were also deemed well qualified for such a service. Among these may be named John Adamson, principal of the University of Edinburgh, and Robert Lowrie, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, who *conformed* at the Restoration, and died bishop of Brechin in 1677. But the honour was practically to be won in England, and thus every Scottish aspirant was placed at disadvantage. The new version of the Psalms formed a most important element in the scheme for uniformity of religion and worship between the kingdoms. London was the

scene of negotiations in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. London was the field where the battle for uniformity must be fought. Edinburgh and Glasgow might indeed remonstrate and fret, but any successful step towards the idol of uniformity could only be accomplished in London, and would be materially affected by local interest, reputation, and prejudice. The competitor of Rouse was William Barton, a graduate of Oxford, and afterwards minister of St. Martin's, Leicester. To ensure the success of his version, he paid most humble court to the House of Lords, and in return received their patronage and good offices. Rouse, on the other hand, sought the support of the House of Commons, of which he was himself a member. In those days, there could be no doubt as to the result. Rouse accordingly gained the honour which he coveted, and Barton asserted the prerogative of failure, by protesting in life and death that he had been wronged and persecuted.

It is convenient to begin with the unsuccessful version. It has special claims on our interest and regard, as the psalter which competed with our own, and was the version beyond all others supported by the House of Lords. In a revised form, it threatened at one critical period to be successful, not indeed on account of any really altered opinion as to the excellence of Rouse's version, but on account of an alteration in Rouse's politics. It is very instructive to observe how the judgment of a community is the plaything of its prejudices, and how it estimates the merits of a work not according to its intrinsic worth, but

\* February 11, 1647.



according to the partisan relationships of the author. Some legislators are held to speak the very wisdom of Solomon, even when they utter puerilities; and some bards are regarded as inditing the noblest poetry, when they compose the vilest doggerel, or the lowest development of nursery rhymes. But to return to Barton. On 7th October 1645, he presented a petition to the House of Lords, upon which it was immediately ordered: "That two books of David's Psalms, composed in English metre by the petitioner, and presented to their Lordships, are hereby referred to the Assembly of Divines, to be read over and judged by them; and the result of their judgments thereupon returned to this House, that such further direction may be given, touching the same, as shall be meet." \* We shall by and by hear what the divines at Westminster had to say upon the books, but in the meantime we must make ourselves acquainted with them, so that we may understand and appreciate the verdict. Barton's version was published originally with this title, "The Book of Psalms in Metre, close and proper to the Hebrew, smooth and pleasant for the metre, plain and easy for the tunes. 1644. W.B." I shall give a few specimens from this edition; but my readers will be surprised at the alterations which were made in subsequent editions, from which I shall also quote. The fact is, that when Barton saw that Rouse's version was gaining general favour, he applied himself to the rather ungracious task of reviewing and revising it. Eventually the editions which he published of his own version, were chiefly composed of his amendments on Rouse. This must be kept in mind, or some things which follow will seem inexplicable. On September 27, 1650, Barton presented an humble petition to the House of Commons, on which it was ordered: "That it be referred to Mr. Carill, Mr. Nye, Mr. Bond, Mr. Stronge, Mr. Sedgewick, and Mr. Byfield, or any three of them, to peruse and consider of the Translation of the Psalms, set out by Mr. Rouse,

\* Lords' Journals, vol. vii., p. 627.

and since reviewed by the said William Barton: and if they shall approve of the same, then to license the printing thereof." \* A few years later, Barton complains, in the preface to his work, that the "Scots have put forth a Psalm Book, most what composed out of mine and Mr. Rouse's." It is not an easy matter, as we shall now see, to determine what Barton regarded as his own version, as we have both an original version and an amendment upon Rouse's; and many varying editions of both.

#### BARTON'S VERSION OF 1644.

##### PSALM I.

That man is blest and blest again,  
That doth not walk astray  
By counsels of ungodly men,  
Nor stands in sinners' way.

Nor sits in seat of scornful mates,  
But in God's law delights;  
And thereupon he meditates,  
Continual days and nights.

Like planted tree by water springs,  
Such one shall he be made,  
Which in his season fruit forth brings,  
Whose leaf shall never fade, &c., &c.

It is almost certain that this version suggested one or two marked lines in Rouse's revised edition; but it is deserving of notice that Barton in subsequent editions departs from them. Compare the foregoing with the edition published by Barton himself in 1668:—

#### PSALM I. VERSION OF 1668.

The man is blest that shuns the snare  
Of wicked men's advice;  
Whom sinners' path, or scorner's chair,  
By no means can entice.

But his delight, both day and night,  
Is in God's holy law,  
Whereon he waits and meditates  
With constant care and awe.

Like planted tree by water springs  
Shall such a man be made,  
A tree that timely fruits forth brings,  
Whose leaf shall never fade, &c., &c.

#### BARTON'S VERSION OF 1644.

##### PSALM XXIII.

The Lord's my shepherd to provide,  
No woful want shall I abide.  
In pastures best  
He makes me rest;  
He leads me by still waters' side;

\* Commons' Journals, vol. vi., p. 474.

Restores my soul as guide thereto  
For his name's sake in paths most true.  
Though I invade  
Death's horrid shade,  
That darksome valley walking through.

Yet I will fear no kind of ill,  
For thou art ever present still  
With me, O God,  
Thy staff, thy rod,  
My heart with heavenly comforts fill, &c. &c.

Look now at his version of the same  
Psalm, published afterwards :—

My shepherd is the living Lord  
And he that doth me feed.  
How can I but be richly stored  
While he supplies my need?

In pastures green and flourishing  
He makes me to repose,  
Hard by the silent water spring  
Whose stream with pleasure flows.

He guides my soul, so apt to stray,  
A safer course to take,  
Conducting me in his right way  
For his alone name's sake.

And though I walk in death's dark shade  
It shall not me dismay;  
For thou art with me, and hast made  
Thy rod and staff my stay, &c., &c.

Let me give one more specimen of the  
version of 1644 which was referred to the  
Westminster Assembly :—

#### PSALM LXXXVII.

Sion's foundation edifice  
In holy mountains lies;  
Whose gates God's love  
Doth far above  
All Jacob's dwellings prize.

O city of God, thy structure's frame  
Obtains a glorious name.  
Rahab for one,  
And Babylon,  
I to my friends will name.

Philistia, Ethiop, Tyre, lo there  
This man was made an heir;  
And Sion (they  
Shall point and say)  
Did this and that man bear.

The Highest Himself shall stablish her,  
And this man's birth refer  
To Sion mount,  
So make his count  
When he shall register.

As well the voice of him that sings,  
As him that tunes the strings,  
Of music sweet,  
Therein shall meet;  
In thee are all my springs!

The Westminster divines reported to the House of Lords on November 14, 1645, that they had received an order from the House of Commons in 1643 to give their judgment upon the psalms in metre by Mr. Rouse, a member of that House—that they had most carefully and diligently perused that version by themselves and with the author—that it had been sent to Scotland for revisal, and had there been very well approved—that all these proceedings had been completed before they received their Lordships' order—but that, in obedience to that order, they had anew considered Mr. Barton's version, which had been previously compared with Mr. Rouse's, and found reason to certify, "That albeit the said Mr. Barton hath taken very good and commendable pains in his metaphor, yet the other version so exactly perused and amended by the said Mr. Rouse and the Committee of the Assembly, with long and great labour, is so closely framed according to the original text, as that we humbly conceive it will be useful for the edification of the Church."\* Barton, however, was not to be easily discomfited. He presented another petition to the House of Lords, and they expressly recommended his translation to the Assembly of Divines, and required them to shew cause why his version should not be sung in churches as well as any other.† But the House of Commons in the meantime resolved, "That the Book of Psalms set forth by Mr. Rouse, and perused by the Assembly of Divines, be forthwith printed in sundry volumes, and that the said Psalms and none other shall, after the first day of January next, be sung in all Churches and Chapels within the Kingdom of England, dominion of Wales, and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed."‡ The concurrence of the Lords was desired merely as a matter of form. And in a few days days afterwards,§ a message was brought from the Westminster Assembly to the House of Lords, representing the serious evils that would arise from the public use

\* Lords' Journals, vol. vii, p. 704.

† March 26, 1646.

‡ April 15, 1646.

§ April 25, 1646.

of different versions of the psalms in metre. The doom of Barton's version was sealed.

FRANCIS ROUSE, the successful competitor, was a younger son of Sir Anthony Rouse, knight, and was born at Halton in Cornwall. He was several times elected a Member of Parliament, and was one of the lay Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. When Baillie went to London to attend this Assembly, he formed an intimate friendship with Rouse, and entertained the highest opinion of his merits. He called him "ane old most honest member of the House of Commons," and he dedicated to him the sermon which he preached before the House in 1643. But Baillie's friendship and admiration were subsequently very much modified when Rouse joined the Independents. He was appointed Provost of Eaton College in 1644, and retained this lucrative office till his death in 1658. Clarendon thus records another appointment during the Commonwealth in terms not very flattering. "They (the Parliament) repaired to the Parliament House, and made choice of one Rouse to be their speaker, an old gentleman of Devonshire, who had been a member of the former Parliament, and in that time been preferred and made Provost of the College of Eaton, which office he then enjoyed, with an opinion of having some knowledge in the Latin and Greek tongues, but of a very mean understanding, but thoroughly engaged in the guilt of the times."\*

In preparing his version of the Psalms, Rouse had not at first contemplated a new translation, though he was well qualified to make it. Notwithstanding Clarendon's statement, he was a man of distinction, and profound learning. He states that many passages in the old version "seemed to call aloud for amendment," but he feared that a version wholly new would not please many. His first labour was therefore directed only to improve the more faulty passages of Sternhold and Hopkins, and the first edition of his version is merely a revision

of theirs. But he soon offered a new translation, which after repeated reviews by the Westminster Divines, and by the General Assembly in Scotland, was adopted in both nations as the authorised version. He shewed an earnest desire to adopt every reasonable amendment which was proposed to him. The Westminster Assembly divided itself into three committees, and each committee had charge of the revision of fifty psalms. Rouse kept himself in communication with all the committees and aided their labours. After this revision, the Psalms were sent by fifties to Scotland, for the review of of the General Assembly.\* Baillie certifies that "all the corrections of Mr. Rouse's Psalms, and advices which come up from thence, were very friendly received, and almost all of them followed."† The entire version underwent several revisals in Scotland. For example, on July 8, 1647, the General Assembly directed Mr John Adamson to revise Rouse's paraphrase of the Psalms, and Mr. John Row's observations thereupon, and to have his opinion thereof ready for the next Assembly. On the 28th August following, the General Assembly, after hearing a report on the subject, appointed Mr. John Adamson to examine the first forty psalms, Mr. Thomas Craufurd the second forty, Mr. John Row the third forty, and Mr John Nevey the last thirty. Another revision was made in 1648; and in 1649 the revised copy was transmitted to Presbyteries for their consideration. In the same year, "the commission of Assembly, considering the power they have from the late Assembly to give a competent and honest acknowledgment and reward to the young man that has been employed in writing of the several copies of the Paraphrase of the Psalms, corrected from time to time, do therefore appoint the brethren appointed to revise that paraphrase, who can best know his pains, to consider what shall be given unto him, &c."

Yet in this year also, 1649, Baillie wrote from London expressing some misgivings on the subject. He says, "I

\* History of the Rebellion, book xiv.

\* Baillie's Letters, vol. ii., pp. 330-1.

† Ibid., p. 397.

think at last we shall get a new Psalter. I have furthered that work ever with my best wishes, but the scruple now arises of it in my mind, the first author of the translation, Mr Rouse, my good friend, has complied with the sectaries, and is a member of their Republic. How a Psalter of his framing, albeit with much variation, shall be received by our Church, I do not well know; yet it is needful we should have one, and a better in haste we cannot have.”\*

Without at present entering on the special characteristics of Rouse's revised version, as adopted by the Church of Scotland, I quote a psalm from his first edition in 1643, that my readers may, for themselves, observe the nature and extent of the changes which were made on it. Yet it is necessary to add that many of the alterations were suggested by the author himself, after more mature study, and that he manifested the most liberal spirit in adopting the suggestions of others. It is no small testimony to the single-heartedness and enlightened devotion of this man, that his version of the Psalms has come down to us without the repetition of his name. He sacrificed his own literary fame, that he might be even the unremembered instrument of providing for his fellow-countrymen a noble version of the Psalms in metre. My readers will peruse the following psalm with interest. It is the first form of our present version, and the variations between them shew the nature of the revisions:—

ROUSE'S VERSION, 1643.

PSALM XCIII.

The Lord doth reign, and clothed is he  
With majesty and light :  
His works do shew him clothed to be  
And girt about with might.

For this round world, by his great strength,  
Established hath he :  
Yea he so surely hath it set  
That moved it cannot be.

Of old most firmly 'stablished is  
Thy throne of majesty :  
And thou without beginning art  
From all eternity.

\* Baillie's Letters, vol. iii., p. 97.

The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,  
They lifted up their voice; ;  
The floods have lifted up their waves  
And made a mighty noise.

The Lord this noise of many floods  
In might exceedeth far :  
The Highest overcomes the sea  
When his waves mighty are.

Thy testimonies are most sure  
And surely lead to bliss :  
And holiness for ever, Lord,  
In thine house comely is.

The ministers in Scotland who rendered the chief and most important services in revising and correcting Rouse's version, were John Adamson, Zacharie Boyd, and Robert Lowrie. The Commission of Assembly recorded their thanks and acknowledgments to these clergymen for their invaluable labours.\* Rouse's revised Psalter was judicially adopted as the authorised version of the Church of Scotland by the Commission of Assembly on November 23, 1649, and they directed that it alone should be used for public worship in Scotland after the 1st May following; and on January 8, 1650, the estates of the kingdom ratified and confirmed the deliverance of the Commission, and enacted accordingly. From that May-day these Psalms have been the cherished manual of divine praise in Scotland; they have gone up to heaven in the melodies that are heard in the abodes of the righteous; they have stirred zeal, and kindled patriotism in the day of oppression; they have gathered into one the voices of mighty multitudes, like the sound of many waters; they have been associated with the earliest lessons of piety, and the last utterances of devotion; they have been carried and kept like the ark of God, by the exile and the wanderer: they have, when the Word of the Lord was rare and precious, cheered the faint and dying soldier on his lonely bed; they have been endeared to Scotchmen by the chequered experience of many generations, by the noble treasures of national tradition, by the sunny recollections of prosperity and peace, and by the golden memories of adversity.

\* January 1, 1650.

THE two metrical versions best known in Great Britain are Rouse's revised version, and Tate and Brady's. The first is universally known in Scotland, and the second extensively used in England. The peculiar qualities of these translations indicate the diversities of national genius and temperament. The English version is characterised by sentimentality—the Scottish by intellectual severity. The one is musical and smooth, the other is often harsh—the one is discursive and often neglectful of the original, the other endeavours to follow it with scrupulous sternness—the one is pretty and languishing, after the style of stanzas for a lady's album, the other is bold and stately like the voice of an old prophet. The English version, however, does not occupy the same place in England as the other does with us. In England, parents and teachers never prescribe passages of the metrical Psalms to be committed to memory. The Creed, the Collects, and miscellaneous hymns, are there the study and work of the Sunday school. The Psalms are thus comparatively unknown. There are two reasons for this state of things—1st, the idea which has been entertained in England that the singing of metrical Psalms is not strictly a part of divine service, but rather a pious exercise tolerated before and after morning and evening prayer; \* and 2d, the character of the version itself, which does not successfully bear the ordeal of frequent repetition. Perhaps it is necessary to add that it was never formally adopted or enjoined by the Church of England. It was recommended by the Bishop of London to the clergy of his diocese, and was patronised by Archbishops Tillotson and Sharp, who administered the ecclesiastical affairs in the reign of William and Mary. But the version never attained to any general use. In some dioceses the Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins were retained,† and in some others

collections of hymns were employed, on the choice and personal responsibility of each clergyman. And thus in England, where there is a jealous dread of the least departure from authorised formularies, the praises of the sanctuary have been left to the arbitrary and contradictory choice of individual ministers; while in Scotland, where there has been an avowed abhorrence of prescribed forms, the manual of praise has been carefully compiled, and is fixed, exclusive, and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The restriction has been productive of immense and unsuspected good.

The religion of England presents a different type, and is the embodiment of a different mind from that of Scotland. The one cultivates *emotional*, the other *intellectual* piety—the one impresses the affections, the other occupies the reason. English Protestantism has enlisted the senses in the service of religion, it has aimed at gratifying the ear and the eye in the duties of devotion, and it has imported into divine worship some things of foreign and oriental origin, not essentially Christian. It leads men unconsciously to trust in certain talismanic words, and to find refuge in mere forms. The continual and undeviating repetition of the same phrases in divine worship, has assuredly a tendency to create a mechanical religion, and eventually to make the service unmeaning and superstitious. The Church of Rome is a great practical illustration of this fact. But there is much Romanism which would be disowned at the Vatican, and there are many habits and frailties in our own natures which we never analyse, and which contain elements which we are every day repudiating. The Christian accustomed to a never-varying liturgy, cannot be persuaded that he needs to guard himself against a superstitious use of it. If he be not watchful, he will employ it as a charm. A ludicrous instance of this danger forces itself on my recollection. A few years ago, a noble duke's carriage halted at a post-

\* Strype's *Ecl. Memor.*, vol. ii., part 1, 135.

† Defence of the old singing Psalms by Bishop Beveridge.

ing-house in Argyleshire. The duke and his lady walked about till fresh horses could be harnessed, or rather till they were brought in stealthily from the work of the farm. Meanwhile the groom had neglected to secure the carriage by placing a stone before one of the wheels, and, as the road was by no means level, but, on the contrary, descended at a Highland gradient from the door of the hostlery, away went the vehicle adown the hill, bearing a lady's maid seated in proud solitude in the rumble. No sooner did the worthy Abigail find herself borne along by an invisible power, than she stood erect, and set herself loudly and fast to intone the Creed, making the necessary obeisance with accustomed grace. She thus repeated the Creed twice, to the great astonishment and even the horror of the gillies who rushed to the rescue, and was proceeding with her third performance, when the errant carriage was safely arrested. Now, with all charity, I fear that such an appeal to the Creed could only be made by one habituated to an unintelligent and superstitious use of the words. But the most intelligent man in the world will only too easily acquire that habit.

But there are instances in which the soul suspects the efficacy of the form, and then to doubt is to make shipwreck of faith. It is a sad story which is told by Mylne, in his "Lives of the Bishops of Dunkeld," regarding George Brown, who held that see from 1484 till 1514.\* He had some secret misgivings that his Pater-nosters and Ave-Marias would fail him in his hour of need, and that when the keepers of the house should tremble, and they that look out of the windows be darkened, he would find no refuge in the consecrated words which he had often pompously pronounced over others. Before receiving extreme unction, "he entered a solemn protest to this purpose;—That, as he was at that time of a sound mind and firm in the faith, if afterwards, through bodily weakness, he should be tempted by the devil, or by the arguments of designing men, and, perhaps (which God forbid), should in

\* Mylne incorrectly makes the latter date 1519

some degree turn aside from the faith, therefore he entered his protest that he might not be judged by what he did then, but by what he had proposed when he had been of a sound mind." Who can tell the sorrow that perplexed this apprehensive spirit?

Many modern Presbyterians have done what John Knox never would do, in disregarding helps to devotion, and in the assumption of a spirituality above the average attainment of human nature. While we maintain that *superstition* is the danger incident to prescribed forms of prayer, are we ignorant that *fanaticism* is the danger incident to the want of them? There is, however, a more humble and a more enlightened spirit gaining ground among us. No one will now openly ascribe to inspiration the rhapsodies or comminations of ill-informed and morbid minds. We have publicly cast aside the traditions and prejudices of a hundred and fifty years, and deliberated on "aids to devotion." We have avowed a paternal and superintending interest in the homely services of the emigrant's little sanctuary; we have awaked to the exigencies of many an out-lying cottage, and many a storm-girt island, where the church-bell cannot be heard; we have at last thought, with a sense of responsibility, of our dear brethren sojourning in the uttermost parts of the earth, or doing business in great waters, and seeing the wonders of the Lord in the deep. Let us, then, no longer deceive ourselves with the imagination, that any method of Christian worship can, of itself, secure us against irreverent and rash approaches to the throne of divine grace, or that the most imposing ritual of a cathedral in England needs more the preparation of the heart than the severest simplicity of a village church in Scotland. Whenever we come into the place where prayer is wont to be made—whether it be the rudest structure that ever sheltered a Christian assembly from the wintry storm, or the most solemn temple that ever suggested thoughts of the House not made with hands—we need to remember the warning,—"Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house

of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." There are difficulties and temptations on every side; and the man who holds that his own form of worship is the only safe and edifying method of divine service, only exposes his ignorance of his own danger. The history of our Church is painfully instructive on this subject. How many questions of arrangement have been made questions of life? How many things indifferent have been forced by ruthless hands into the inquisition of the direst necessity? It has often seemed as if experience refused to teach wisdom. Rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, never acknowledged the truism, that the institutions which flourish on one soil may wither on another, and that the religious mechanism of one community is not generally consistent with the traditions and associations of its neighbour. England will never be Presbyterian. Scotland will never be Prelatic. This distinction between the nations is written in their best blood, and could only be effaced by such a demoralisation as would leave nothing noble of either country.

Some of these considerations are necessary to a right understanding of Scottish ecclesiastical affairs. They help to explain how our metrical Psalms are a national treasure, consecrated by the most moving associations; how they are a monument of ancestral piety and independence, all the more sacred that they are the only formulary of devotion transmitted to us in uninterrupted use. They were matured in adversity. They are the fruit of a troublous time, when affliction gave to youth the premature aspect and voice of age, and when the mind was unpolished and stern in its utterance. There was no leisure, then, for ornament. Thoughts clothed themselves in the severest garb; and that discourse was the most approved which, though harsh and unmusical, was yet expressive and perspicuous. But without attempting to decide whether the religious mind of Scotland is the result of external circumstances, or the natural fruit of the national genius, I cannot deny that there has been generally mani-

fest in Scotland a tendency not only to sacrifice wantonly all the advantages of literary and rhetorical excellence, but to affect a pride in extravagant and unnecessary rudeness. How, otherwise, can we account for the state of Church music in many provinces; or the demeanour of many rustic worshippers in entering or retiring from church; or the adoption, and continued popularity, of some metrical Psalms which are so perplexed by unnatural inversions as to be almost unintelligible, and so encumbered by harsh sounds and phrases as to be most offensive to the ear? Let any man look at Psalm xix., and seriously consider whether human ingenuity could possibly render one of the most sublime passages of Scripture, in any method, more rude and unseemly:—

The heav'n's God's glory do declare,  
The skies his hand-works preach:  
Day utters speech to day, and night  
To night doth knowledge teach.  
There is no speech nor tongue to which  
Their voice doth not extend:  
Their line is gone through all the earth,  
Their words to the world's end.

In them he set the sun a tent;  
Who bridegroom-like forth goes  
From 's chamber, as a strong man doth  
To run his race rejoice.  
From heav'n's end is his going forth,  
Circling to th' end again;  
And there is nothing from his heat  
That hidden doth remain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Unspotted is the fear of God,  
And doth endure for ever;  
The judgments of the Lord are true  
And righteous altogether.  
They more than gold, yea, much fine gold,  
To be desired are;  
Than honey, honey from the comb  
That droppeth, sweeter far.

This does not deserve the name of rhyme, and in some parts is obscure and incorrect. But there are more unfortunate passages in our version. Our Psalm lxxxvii. has neither rhyme nor meaning, though it is one of the noblest songs in the original. Augustine comments on it with peculiar fervour and happiness. It is a glorious prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles, and the admission of even the old enemies of Israel

to the privileges of the city of God. It is just, however, to acknowledge that many commentators have been ingeniously dull regarding this passage. Matthew Henry is witty and entertaining, as usual, but he utterly fails in discovering the burden and scope of the Psalm. As might be expected, Scott is in the same condemnation, and ostentatiously makes fellowship with his great authority, Bishop Parker. But, on the other hand, Calvin's annotations are learned, eloquent, and conclusive. Bishop Horne, also, gives an admirable commentary, and brings out the rare beauty and significance of the passage. Buchanan's Latin version is felicitous and very suggestive. Milton's version is excellent, though, strange to say, he stumbles at the Hebraism of "man and man" in the fifth verse. Gesenius has shewn that this is an emphatic method of denoting *every man*.\* Yet our metrical Psalms, which profess to be "translated and diligently compared with the original text and former translations," give us the following perversion:—

Upon the hills of holiness  
He his foundation sets.  
God, more than Jacob's dwellings all,  
Delights in Zion's gates.  
Things glorious are said of thee,  
Thou city of the Lord.  
Rahab and Babel I, to those  
That know thee, will record :

Behold ev'n Tyrus, and with it  
The land of Palestine,  
And likewise Ethiopia ;  
This man was born therein.  
And it of Zion shall be said,  
This man and that man there  
Was born ; and he that is most high  
Himself shall stablish her. &c. &c.

I can say nothing more of this unfortunate specimen of the Scottish version than that there is a worse, viz., the same Psalm in the English version:—

I'll mention Rahab with due praise,  
In Babylon's applauses join,  
The fame of Ethiopia raise,  
With that of Tyre and Palestine,  
And grant that some amongst them born  
Their age and country did adorn.

\* Grammar by Rodiger, translated by Davies,  
p 164

But still of Sion I'll aver  
That many such from her proceed :  
Th' Almighty shall establish her ;  
His gen'ral list shall shew when read  
That such a person there was born,  
And such did such an age adorn. &c. &c.

Dr. Brady the king's chaplain, and Mr. Tate the poet-laureate, had, so far as the Psalms were concerned, the melancholy fate to blight whatever they touched. Under their control sublimity became ludicrous, and the bold and majestic eloquence of the Hebrews degenerated into frivolous sentimentality. Their verses are generally smooth and musical, but this is very often at the expense of dignity and power. They are continually straining after elegance, sometimes without success, and often to the total obliteration of their author's meaning. And though the Psalms are exuberant with sublime and pathetic passages, such qualities find no representation in the English version. It is, indeed, more a collection of religious verses such as a young lady at school might compose, than a metrical translation of the Psalms of David. The power, the pathos, the sublimity, the tenderness, the soaring spirit, and the great heart of the sweet singer of Israel, are there sought for in vain. All the varied moods and styles of the Psalter, are there reduced to the common and monotonous standard of one effeminate versification. The occasional rudeness of the Scottish version is at least manly and expressive, and is soon unnoticed by reason of the deep thought which it enshrines. It endures with growing advantage the ordeal of study and repetition. Our version often rises to sublimity, and rarely, if ever, interposes trifling associations. It is often exquisitely pathetic, and sometimes breathes the very spirit of the Psalmist. In all these respects it is the very counterpart of the English version.

Let us see how Tate and Brady render a sublime passage. One might imagine that it would be scarcely possible to make a translation of Psalm xviii. without preserving some traces of the grand original: "He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and



did fly : yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." Yet, what can be said of the following version ?—

He left the beauteous realms of light,  
Whilst heav'n bow'd down its awful head ;  
Beneath his feet substantial night  
Was like a sable carpet spread.  
The chariot of the King of kings,  
Which active troops of angels drew,  
On a strong tempest's rapid wings  
With most amazing swiftness flew.

The severe grandeur of the description is thus perseveringly annihilated, and unworthy and incongruous elements are forced upon our notice. These lines are exactly what might be expected from an upholsterer's apprentice, aspiring to be an auctioneer. Without paying special notice to the unauthorised and puerile perversion of the Psalmist's meaning in the first two lines, we have intruded on us a detailed inventory of articles which, alas ! were unknown to David. We have the rare commodity of "*substantial night*," and the luxury of a "*sable carpet*," and the "*chariot of the King of kings*," and the stirring spectacle of "*active troops of angels*," and "*a strong tempest's rapid wings*," and the lame, impotent, and contemptible conclusion of "*most amazing swiftness*." This is a profane degradation of the sublime, and therefore we shall have no more of it.

Let us turn to a pathetic passage. What can afford a better specimen than Psalm xxii. ? "Be not far from me, for trouble is near ; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me : strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." Tate and Brady thus amplify and destroy the passage :—

Withdraw not then so far from me,  
When trouble is so nigh ;  
O send me help ! thy help on which  
I only can rely.  
High pamp'ring bulls, a frowning herd,  
From Basan's forest met,  
With strength proportion'd to their rage,  
Have me around beset.  
They gape on me, and ev'ry mouth  
A yawning grave appears ;  
The desert lion's savage roar  
Less dreadful is than theirs.

These stanzas are utterly inconsistent with the sorrow which they affect to ex-

press. But the following specimen is still worse. "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me : O Lord, make haste to help me." This earnest cry for deliverance is thus burlesqued by Tate and Brady :—

But, Lord, to my relief draw near,  
For never was more pressing need ;  
In my deliverance, Lord, appear,  
And add to that deliverance speed !

It were a long and weary task to repeat the instances in which Tate and Brady wilfully misinterpret and pervert passages. In Psalm lxxx. they destroy the reference to the three tribes encamped before the tabernacle, and the remarkable chorus which is repeated with significant alterations. In Psalm lxxxvi. they have ascribed to the Psalmist a spirit and design which are altogether unwarranted. "Shew me a token for good ; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed : because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me :"—

Some signal give, which my proud foes  
May see with shame and rage,  
When thou, O Lord, for my relief  
And comfort dost engage.

But it is unnecessary to pursue this subject. Tate and Brady's version was made from the Prayer-book translation of the Psalms—a very inferior, unsatisfactory, and incorrect work, as might be expected from its actual character of being a *translation of a translation*. For the version in the Book of Common Prayer was not made from the original, but chiefly from the Greek, and even where the Greek is least trustworthy. In addition to this, the metrical version exhibits the natural fruit of a time of courtly ease and leisure. It rasps down the energy and earnestness of the royal Psalmist, and is more concerned with the prettiness than the fidelity of the sentiments which it ascribes to him. It is wanting in dignity and sobriety of thought. It wears a holiday garb, and speaks in a holiday tone. And therefore it is a comforter unsought and unwelcome in the house of mourning. So long as religion is made to consist chiefly in pageantry, it is sufficient : but when the soul refuses to be charmed by music, it must have something manlier, nobler, and nearer the heavenly original. When

the mind is crippled and repressed by a never-yielding form, and divine worship becomes a mere repetition of certain prescribed words, the English version of the Psalms will of course be as acceptable as any other. But to those who only use a Liturgy as an aid and guide, the version will become distasteful or indifferent.

It will not express the depth of their feeling, and will rarely awaken an echo in their hearts. The Scottish version is infinitely preferable. With all its imperfections, it has an air of majesty which the other never attains; and though often rude in rhyme, it gives impressive utterance to the great things of God.

## No. XII.

WHILE admitting that the Scottish version is, in many instances, rude and uncouth, I am anxious to add that many passages which have been ridiculed and censured are admirable, and that some others have been beautified by the influence of habit and association. Of the latter class I fear that my best illustration is in Psalm xxiii. Alas, alas! It is consecrated by holy memories of home, by solemn recollections of parental care and piety, by fond thoughts of dear companions who have fallen asleep, by everything which makes me almost tremble at what I write. Yet the more it is considered and fairly regarded, the less can we justify the reverence and love which we lavish on it. Yes, our version of that Psalm, which our little children, with demure faces, lisp so sweetly, is unfortunate. With an ambitious pretence to simplicity, it is not simple; with an affectation of artlessness, it is involved and obscure. The arrangement of the lines is generally without reference to their intrinsic signification, so that the fair and rosy children repeat them either with a wrong meaning or with none,—and the old and gray children are misled in the same way.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green: He leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again;  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
Ev'n for His own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear none ill,  
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod  
And staff me comfort still. &c.

Familiar as household words, sacred as

a father's last message, are these lines in Scotland, but their sanctity and beauty are all conventional. The verses are neither musical nor eloquent. The sense of the second line passes awkwardly into the third—a new and independent idea is started in the middle of that line, and passes into the fourth—and this is done so clumsily that it suggests meanings and connexions which were not intended. The first stanza is neither well arranged nor happily expressed; and the same judgment must, with full force, be also applied to the third. It should not, therefore, surprise us that no stranger admires this Psalm, and that our devout and natural preference for it should meet with no sympathy abroad. This does not arise from a general dislike to our version among those who have not known it with the associations of early life. On the contrary, even a slight acquaintance with our version impresses an intelligent stranger with its value, and demonstrates the truth of Sir Walter Scott's testimony, who preferred Sternhold and Hopkins to Tate and Brady, and our own Psalms to both, and who said of our version, "Though homely, it is plain, forcible, and intelligible, and very often possesses a rude sort of majesty which, perhaps, would be ill-exchanged for mere elegance." There are many of our Psalms which even those who have been habituated to the English version quote with profound admiration. Such are our Psalms xl., xlvi., lvii., lxi., &c. &c. Some years ago, in Northumberland, a lady, who had lived in Scotland for a while, asked me to repeat to her our version of Psalm xx., as she had been much impress-

ed by its solemn stateliness. The version is a noble one and truly deserving of admiration—

Jehovah hear thee in the day  
When trouble He doth send;  
And let the name of Jacob's God  
Thee from all ill defend! &c. &c.

But its value and excellence in the admiration of my friend can only be brought out by quoting the corresponding stanza in the English version with which she had from infancy been familiar. The one is all force, the other all feebleness: the one is worthy of the theme, the other is only worthy of itself. All the associations of childhood could not hide the inferiority—

The Lord to thy request attend,  
And hear thee in distress;  
The Name of Jacob's God defend,  
And grant thy arms success.

Our whole version, however, cannot pretend to the special excellence which I have now pointed out. We have some verses which have certainly long outlived the peculiar pronunciation which must have prevailed when they were fashioned, so that they are musical no more. We have verses too, creating syllables for convenience, and rhyming with ingenious discord. It is enough to quote the following:—

#### PSALM LXXIV.

- 2 O call to Thy remembrance  
Thy congregation,  
Which Thou hast purchased of old;  
Still think the same upon.
- 3 To these long desolations  
Thy feet lift, do not tarry;  
For all the ills Thy foes have done  
Within Thy sanctuary.
- 5 A man was famous, and was had  
In estimation,  
According as he lifted up  
His axe thick trees upon. &c. &c.

#### PSALM LXXXIX.

- 31 If they my laws break, and do not  
Keep my commandments. &c.

These, and some other specimens, are undoubtedly very rude, and sound most harshly to modern ears; but, in one respect at least, they are intensely interesting. They are memorials of the old intimacy between Scotland and France,

which materially affected our language, and is still traceable in many a phrase, accent, and pronunciation, which are supposed to be exclusively our own. We have long been receding from the old standard, and have adapted our words and ways to a fashion nearer home, but betimes an expression heard in a remote Scottish hamlet, or the burden of an old Scottish song, or a term of old Scottish sport, or a form of old Scottish civility, or the intonation of old Scottish devotion, reminds us of the old alliance of the Forth and the Seine. The time was when Scotland educated herself in France, and France found her security and learning in Scotland.

The obvious and acknowledged imperfections of the Scottish and English versions, have led to many attempts at improvement. Since the beginning of last century, there have been nearly one hundred new metrical versions composed and published in Britain. Few of these have attracted any notice, and very few, indeed, are even tolerably well known. No version has ever attained a position to compete for public favour with our own. I would now call attention to one or two of the best of these productions. By far the most valuable version of those referred to, is that of Merrick, published in 1765. It was not designed to be a manual of public praise, but a translation in verse for private and studious use, giving a critical rendering of the original. With this view, the labours of the learned and accomplished author were carefully revised by Dr. Lowth and other eminent scholars. These considerations would lead us to expect a version interesting only to the Hebrew and Biblical student, unsuited to the general reader, and sacrificing elegance and beauty to the severest fidelity of a verbal translation. But with all its learning and critical worth, it is distinguished no less for grace than accuracy, and it is ever more admired, the more it is perused and studied. Its value is specially recognised and attested by Dr. Horne, who, in his commentary on the Book of Psalms, generally quotes it in preference to any prose version of a difficult or obscure passage. In his pre-

face,\* Mr. Merrick states, "It may be proper to advertise the reader that the version or paraphrase of the Psalms, now put into his hands, has not been calculated for the uses of public worship. The translator knew not how, without neglecting the poetry, to write in such language as the common sort of people would be likely to understand. For the same reason, he could not confine himself in general to stanzas, nor, consequently, adopt the measures to which the tunes used in our churches correspond." His fear of being unable to write to the comprehension and appreciation of the common sort of people, will immediately appear to be unreasonable. The first specimen which I select is from his version of Psalm xviii., a passage which has already been repeatedly quoted from other translators, and which exhibits a fair example of his work. A careless perusal of the passage will do it injustice.

Woes heaped on woes my heart deplored,  
While sin's proud torrents round me roared ;  
The sepulchre's extended hands  
Had wrapt me in its strongest bands,  
And death, insulting, o'er my head  
Th' inextricable toils had spread.  
My words, as grieved, to God I pray,  
Wing to His heavenly fane their way,  
Through adverse clouds their passage clear,  
Nor unaccepted reach His ear.  
With strong convulsions groaned the ground,  
The hills, with waving forests crowned,  
Loosed from their base, their summits nod,  
And own the presence of their God.  
Collected clouds of wreathing smoke  
Forth from His angry nostrils broke,  
And orbs of fire, with dreadful glare,  
Rushed onward through the glowing air.  
Incumbent on the bending sky,  
The Lord descended from on high,  
And bade the darkness of the pole  
Beneath His feet tremendous roll.  
The cherub to His car He joined,  
And on the wings of mightiest wind,  
As down to earth His journey lay,  
Resistless urged His rapid way.  
Thick-woven clouds around Him closed,  
His secret residence composed,  
And waters high suspended spread  
Their dark pavilion o'er His head. &c.

This measure, which Merrick usually employs, may offend those who are accustomed to see the poetical parts of Scripture translated only in the form of stan-

\* The Psalms translated or paraphrased in English verse, by James Merrick, M.A., late Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford.

zas. But it has infinite advantage over the other in exhibiting the spirit and unbroken connexion of a passage. The *verses* of the Bible, and the *stanzas* of the metrical Psalms, being read as independent paragraphs, conceal many a beauty and obstruct many an important reference. It is, therefore, sometimes of advantage to read Scripture without reference to chapters or verses, and to possess a version of the Psalms like this, which, unfettered by stanzas, aims at expressing freely the progression of thought, the sentiment and the reasoning of the inspired author. But Merrick's version is of special value whenever there is a textual difficulty. It is probable that the following lines express the true meaning of the passage which we have uncouthly rendered, "A man was famous, and was had," &c.—

As when the woodman's stroke invades  
The lofty grove's thick-woven shades,  
So, through thy temple's awful bounds,  
Now here, now there, the axe resounds ;  
And down in shapeless ruins fall  
The sculptures fair that graced its wall,  
Rich with the forests' noblest spoil,  
And wrought by heaven-directed toil.  
Along the violated dome  
Th' intruding flames licentious roam ;  
While spacious courts and towers sublime,  
Whose roofs through long revolving time  
With holy wonder struck each eye,  
Now heaped in dire confusion lie. &c. &c.

A few of the Psalms are in our common metre. The following is a specimen :—

#### PSALM CXXI.

Lo ! from the hills my help descends,  
To them I lift mine eyes.  
My strength on Him alone depends  
Who formed the earth and skies.  
He, ever watchful, ever nigh,  
Forbids thy feet to slide ;  
Nor sleep nor slumber seals the eye  
Of Israel's Guard and Guide.  
He at thy hand, arrayed in might,  
His shield shall o'er thee spread,  
Nor sun by day nor moon by night  
Shall hurt thy favoured head.  
Safe shalt thou go, and safe return,  
While He thy life defends,  
Whose eyes thy every step discern,  
Whose mercy never ends.

Next after Merrick's, but at a respectful distance, may be ranked the Cleveland Psalter, by Archdeacon Churton.\* He is

\* The Book of Psalms, &c. &c., by Edward Churton, M.A., Archdeacon of Cleveland, 1854.

the best of the school of Dr. Isaac Watts, and is often very successful in his labour. He employs every variety of stanza, and generally adapts it with good taste to the character of the composition. If his style is sometimes stiff and constrained, it is never undignified or unworthy of an accomplished scholar. He thus happily renders Psalm lxxxvii. :—

High raised upon the holy hills  
Her sure foundations stand,  
Beloved of God above all homes  
Of Jacob's happy land.

O Zion, glorious things to come  
Of thee, thy prophets sing,  
Thou dwelling-place and earthly rest  
Of heaven's eternal king.

Dark Egypt's sons and Babylon  
To thee shall soon be known;  
The Tyrian and the Philistine  
Be numbered with thine own.

Lo! from Arabia's shores afar,  
The region of the morn,  
New names to Zion's mount are come,  
New souls to God are born.

The birthright of thy citizens  
Glad strangers now shall share,  
All born anew to God, who builds  
Their home of comfort there.

And in the records of His book  
Each name shall be enrolled,  
And of each soul to life new-born,  
The faithful number told.

The children of the song shall come,  
The pipe and tabret bring,  
And living founts of health and joy  
In thee shall ever spring.

A version by Mr. Montague, published in 1851, deserves mention for the extraordinary zeal, learning, and labour which it manifests, but it is most unmusical. His great difficulty has been in his own language. His version in one respect is valuable as a severely literal translation, but it is literal without being literary. The following short specimen will more than suffice :—

#### PSALM LXVIII.

17 God's chariots, that scored thousands count,  
With thousands angels were;  
Even as on Sinai's holy mount,  
The Lord was 'mong them there.

Thou art gone up on high : Thou'st sped;  
Thou victory hast achieved.  
Thy captives hast Thou captive led,  
And gifts from men received.

It is unnecessary to refer particularly to other versions which, notwithstanding the toil, sorrow, hope, and impoverishment of

their fond authors, were published only to be forgotten. Even those versions which were associated with religious sects have perished from the world. The Glassite and the Berean versions, once so prominent among religious publications in Scotland, can now be rarely found even in the collections of the curious. I have already referred to the former of these, and I may offer a short specimen of the latter :\*—

#### PSALM XXI.

I'll sing Messiah, conquering King,  
He glories in Jehovah's strength,  
Jehovah will the kingdom bring  
Subjected to the Son at length.

The Son shall in Jehovah joy,  
In His salvation high exult;  
He'll laugh at all that would annoy,  
Each proud insulter He'll insult.

His heart's desire Thou gavest Him,  
The opening of His lips prevailed;  
His eyes with longing grew not dim  
Till with success His hopes were sealed. &c.

One cannot regret that this and similar versions have fallen into oblivion. They exercised an evil influence on all who used them. They represented a beautiful and sublime part of Scripture in a form repugnant to the minds of educated men, and perverted it from its own glorious purity to a condition unseemly, rude, and grotesque. Spiritual pride and the bitterness of sectarianism had much to do in the formation of some versions; while as to others, we must make no heavier charge than vanity and the old-fashioned anxiety to see one's rhymes in print. But beyond and above these causes, I may safely assert that some of the better versions were suggested by the felt inadequacy of those in common use. In England this has also called forth a profusion of hymns of every varied excellence. In general, however, they are characterised by a style and sentiment unworthy of companionship with the Book of Common Prayer. They are often incorrect and bombastic in style, inflated and meaningless in phrase, wanting in dignity, propriety, reverence, earnestness, intelligence, piety, and everything that

\* The Psalms, &c., by John Barclay, A.M., Minister of the Berean Assembly in Edinburgh. 1776.

constitutes scriptural devotion. The scarcity of good hymns in the English language is a melancholy fact. Hymns are doubtless counted by thousands and tens of thousands, but are there two hundred good and unexceptionable hymns in the whole range of our literature? I fear that there are not nearly so many. In Scotland the same necessity demanded, during last century, a collection of scriptural songs for public worship. The compilers of that collection most unwisely refused to look at good and happy versions of individual Psalms. By this rule they shut themselves out from the richest field for selection. Without interfering with our own time-honoured version, they might have adopted as hymns some of the Psalms translated or paraphrased by Milton, Bishop King, Christopher Pitt, Braithwaite, Nathaniel Cotton, Patrick, Merriek, and others, just as they placed Addison's untextual discourse on Psalm xix. among our hymns. Many paraphrases on the Psalms are very beautiful, and, from the nature of the subject, are more

likely to be correct and devotional than hymns founded on historical narrative or doctrinal exposition. I close this paper with a quotation from a paraphrase on Psalm cxxxix. It is not without merit, but it has peculiar interest as the composition of the romantic, accomplished, and chivalrous original of Sir Walter's Baron Bradwardine. It is inscribed by the author, Alexander Robertson of Strowan, "to my worthy friend, Duncan Toshach of Monzievaird."

But whither can my spirit fly  
To shun His angry face,  
The lustre of whose glorious eye  
Enlightens every place?

If on the wings of morn I'm fled  
And pierce the dawn of day,  
Or in the centre make my bed,  
The Omniscient treads my way.

If my unwary heart should say,  
Darkness my wandering hides,  
Darkness is brighter than the day  
Where glory's King resides.

His smiles dispense a healing ray,  
His frowns a dismal shade;  
The whole creation's light and gay  
When He bestows His aid.

### No. XIII.

THE metrical Paraphrases of Scripture, which have been used in the services of the Church of Scotland for nearly a century, are generally of a superior order, and were the fruit of long experience and deliberation. It will be seen, that at every period the Church has been solicitous to have some Scripture songs in addition to the Psalms. This will seem at once wise and desirable to every one who considers that there are many poetical portions of Scripture eminently and exquisitely fitted for Christian devotion, as they give expression to Christian faith, hope, and love, and elucidate the duties, joys, and consolations of the Gospel more fully and definitely than even the Psalms of David. With the old Psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins, there were several hymns of this nature printed, such as, "An exhortation unto the praise of God, to be sung before morning prayer," "The Lord's Prayer,"

"The Creed," "A Prayer to the Holy Ghost," "A thanksgiving after the receiving of the Lord's Supper," &c., &c. In 1648, while our present version of the Psalms was still being revised, though it had been practically adopted, the General Assembly appointed Mr. John Adamson and Mr. Thomas Crawford, to revise the labours of Mr. Zachary Boyd upon the other Scripture songs. I suppose, however, that the sorrows, crimes, and tumults, which distracted and disgraced Scotland soon after that Assembly, and which were carefully excluded from the visions and romances of Kirkton the historian, could not be ignored or disregarded in real life, and that, on this account, nothing was done in the matter referred to. But a collection of Scripture songs by Mr. Patrick Simpson, minister at Renfrew, was, in 1706, recommended by the General Assembly to be used in private families with the view of

preparing the way for its adoption in public worship. Again, in 1708, the Assembly instructed the Commission to revise the printed version of these songs, and, having amended them, to issue them for public use. But I do not know that they were ever generally adopted or held in very high regard, for in the course of one generation they were forgotten. In 1741, the Assembly, taking no notice of Simpson's songs, instructed the Commission to consider an overture about turning some passages of the Old and New Testament into metre, in order to be used in churches as well as in families, and to take the assistance of learned divines, who had employed their time and pains on subjects of that sort. It appears that the Presbytery of Dundee and the Synod of Angus had been specially diligent in hymnological researches, for, in 1742, they were requested to transmit to the Assembly's committee in Edinburgh the collections which they had prepared or might afterwards compile. New instructions were given in 1744; and a Collection of metrical translations of Scripture was in the following year laid before the Assembly, and was so far approved of, that it was ordered to be printed and transmitted to the several presbyteries for their observations. It was not till 1751 that the Collection was completed. It was then recommended by the Assembly to be used in private families, and to be widely and zealously circulated through the country. But even with this recommendation, the Assembly desired presbyteries to send up their opinions on the Collection, and reserved a full and final approval of it to a future year. Nothing further, however, seems to have been done in the matter for many years. This Collection, the first form of our present Paraphrases, consisted of forty-five hymns, which have all been retained, with alterations. It was soon used generally in private, and occasionally in public. Of the forty-five hymns, nineteen were by Dr. Watts; three by Blair, author of "The Grave;" three by William Robertson, minister first of Borthwick, afterwards of Old Greyfriars', Edinburgh, and father of Prin-

cipal Robertson; two by Dr. Doddridge; and one by Mr. Randal of Stirling. The authorship of the rest is either very uncertain or unknown. As specimens of the old Paraphrases I give the following. The first is by Randal, the author of a sermon on Benevolence, one of the finest discourses in the English language. He was the father of Dr. Randal Davidson of Edinburgh.

- 1 Though all men's eloquence adorned  
My sweet persuading tongue;  
Though I could speak in higher strains  
Than ever angel sung;
- 2 Though prophecy my soul inspired,  
And made all mysteries plain:  
Yet, were I void of Christian love,  
These gifts were all in vain.
- 3 Nay, though my faith with boundless power  
Even mountains could remove,  
I still am nothing, if I'm void  
Of charity and love.
- 4 Though with my goods the poor I fed,  
My body to the flame  
In quest of martyrdom I gave:  
Even this were all in vain.
- 5 Love suffers long; love envies not,  
But love is ever kind;  
She never boasteth of herself,  
Nor proudly lifts the mind.
- 6 Love no unseemly carriage shews,  
She bears no selfish view,  
But lays her own advantage by,  
Her neighbour's to pursue. &c. &c.

The alterations which have been made on this hymn, as seen in our 49th Paraphrase, are judicious, with the exception of that in the first line. "Perfect eloquence" was not a good substitute or change for "all men's," and left the second half of the stanza without any peculiar meaning.

#### Hymn by DODDRIDGE.

- 1 Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes,  
The Saviour promised long!  
Let every heart a throne prepare,  
And every voice a song.
- 3 On Him the Spirit, largely shed,  
Exerts its sacred fire;  
Wisdom, and might, and zeal, and love,  
His holy breast inspire.
- 6 His silver trumpets publish loud  
The jubilee of the Lord;  
Our debts are all forgiven us now,  
Our heritage restored. &c. &c.

## HYMN BY ROBERTSON.

- 1 Let not your hearts with anxious thoughts  
Be troubled or dismayed ;  
But trust to Providence divine,  
And trust my gracious aid.
- 2 I to my Father's house return ;  
There numerous mansions stand,  
And glory manifold abounds  
Through all the happy land.
- 3 If no such happy land there were,  
The truth I'd have declared ;  
And not with vain delusive hopes  
Your easy minds ensnared.
- 4 Now, in your name, I go before  
To take possession there :  
And in the land of promised rest  
Your mansion to prepare.
- 5 But thence I shall return again,  
And take you home with me ;  
There shall we meet to part no more,  
And still together be.
- 6 Thus, whither I am bound you know ;  
And I have shewn the road ;  
For I'm the true and living way  
That leads the soul to God

## HYMN BY BLAIR.

- 1 How still and peaceful is the grave !  
That silent bed, how blest !  
The wicked there from troubling cease,  
And there the weary rest.
- 2 There the freed prisoner groans no more  
Beneath life's galling load ;  
Mute is the oppressor's cruel voice,  
And broke the tyrant's rod.
- 3 There slaves and masters equal lie,  
And share the same repose ;  
The small and great are there ; and friends  
Now mingle with their foes.

## HYMN BY WATTS.

- 1 As when the Hebrew prophet raised  
The brazen serpent high,  
The wounded looked and straight were cured,  
The people ceased to die.
- 2 Look upward in the dying hour,  
And live, the prophet cries ;  
So Christ performs a nobler cure,  
When faith lifts up her eyes.
- 3 High on the cross the Saviour hung ;  
High in the heavens He reigns :  
Here sinners, by th' old serpent stung,  
Look and forget their pains. &c &c.

By comparing these specimens of the old version with the same hymns in the new, my readers can easily appreciate the value of the original Collection, and the nature and extent of the alterations which were made upon it. These were,

on the whole, judicious and excellent, though critics have not been wanting, with more zeal than discretion, and more prejudice than good taste, common sense, and orthodoxy, who have mourned and lamented over the alleged perversion of the old hymns. One of these critics condemns the alterations which were made on the hymn last quoted, and considers the first half of the third stanza, "the sublimest couplet which could be easily selected from the entire range of uninspired writings." The man who could entertain or utter such an opinion must be left alone, as alike inaccessible to the charms of taste and the power of argument. But I do not by any means assert that *all* the alterations were wise. For example, I cannot account for or justify the change which was made on our 25th Paraphrase, written by Robertson, the third stanza of which stood correctly thus :—

As in dry soil, a tender plant  
Weak and neglected grows ;  
So, in this cold and barren world  
That sacred Root arose.

This expresses the idea of the prophet, and is infinitely preferable to the inconsistent and contradictory stanza which has supplanted it—inconsistent, for it has no relation whatever to the original ; and contradictory, for it illustrates the cruel slight and scorn of men endured by our Saviour, by the unnoticed and unknown beauty of a flower in a lonely wilderness !

In 1775 the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr transmitted an overture to the Assembly, craving that such ministers as found it advisable to use the Collection of Paraphrases prepared in 1751 might be allowed to do so. A committee was appointed to report on this subject, and consisted of Dr. Cumming, Dr. Webster, Principal Robertson, Dr. Finlay, Dr. Blair, Dr. Spence, Dr. Ogilvie, Mr. Linning, Mr. Hunter, Dr. Carlyle, Dr. M'Cormick, Mr. Logan, &c., &c., &c. They reported, in 1781, that they had prepared such a collection of sacred poems as they thought might be submitted to the judgment of the Church. The Committee were re-appointed, with



instructions to make what corrections they might yet think necessary on the Paraphrases printed, and to transmit copies of the corrected version to presbyteries for their perusal. The same Assembly allowed the version, so corrected, to be, in the meantime, used in public worship, and gave the printer to the Church the sole privilege of printing and publishing these Translations and Paraphrases for the space of five years. Thus were finally compiled and issued, the Paraphrases now used in Scotland.

In the revision and enlargement of the hymns in 1775 and 1781, the labour was chiefly performed by Logan, minister of South Leith; Cameron, afterwards minister of Kirknewton; Morrison, afterwards minister of Canisbay; and Ogilvie, minister of Midmar. Dr. Findlay, Professor of Theology at Glasgow, spent some fruitless labour in composing and selecting hymns. He was a man of erudition, rather than of accomplishment; and though he had read more books than most men of his day, was yet not distinguished for the elegance of his style, or the correctness of his taste. The following is one of several compositions which he wished to be adopted:—

What equal honours shall we bring  
To Thee, O blessed Lamb!  
When all the notes that angels sing,  
Are far beneath Thy name?

Worthy is He that once was slain—  
The Prince of Peace that died!  
Worthy to rise, and live and reign  
At His great Father's side!

Power and dominion are His due,  
Who stood at Pilate's bar;  
Wisdom belongs to Jesus too,  
Though charged with madness here.

All riches are His right, though He  
Sustained amazing loss;  
Eternal strength is His who left  
His weakness on the cross.

No one can regret that the rhymes of the learned Professor were laid aside. The Committee of 1781 amended and altered the hymns of 1751, and added twenty-two new compositions. The new hymns were chiefly by Logan, and the alterations by Cameron. Logan wrote the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 31st, 38th, 48th,

53d, and 58th, of our present Paraphrases; Cameron wrote the 14th and 17th, assisted in the composition of the 27th and 28th, and altered twenty-seven others; Morrison wrote the 19th, 21st, 29th, 30th, and 35th; Ogilvie wrote the 62d; Blacklock wrote the 16th; Blair wrote the 44th; Martin of Monimail wrote, or at least altered, the 12th; and Robertson, as before mentioned, had written the 25th, 42d, and 43d.

For several years past the Church has acknowledged the necessity of providing additional hymns for public worship, and has appointed various successive committees to prepare selections. This labour has hitherto been attended with little success, though the attention and zeal which have been devoted to it give promise of ultimate advantage. Many persons, however, suppose that it is an easy thing to find a hundred unexceptionable hymns, but it has been actually found a task of perplexing and disappointing difficulty. The United Presbyterians have certainly not been happy or successful in their collection—the Scottish Independents have been still more unfortunate—the Scottish Episcopalians have fared no better—the Church of England has not in general been favoured in the collections of hymns published in the several dioceses—the Methodists have been ingeniously perverse—and the American Churches have out-heroded Herod. There are, no doubt, hymns with which we have been familiar from childhood, and which we therefore regard with partiality, but when they are deliberately considered, they are altogether unsuited for public worship. There are hymns which we may, even the readiest, quote as beautiful examples of devotional feeling and expression, which cannot bear the test of minuter review, and ought not to be adopted in any authorised manual. It is scarcely credible to any one who has not studied the subject, how few good hymns are in our language—how careless and slovenly the best writers have become, whenever they attempted religious odes. Cowper, who is in general so correct and neat, is reckless in many of his hymns, lays aside his usual accu-

racy, and indulges in a very medley and confusion of metaphors, which he would have abhorred in the composition of any other poem. Take, for example, the favourite, oft-learned, oft-quoted hymn—

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins ;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

Here is a stanza, not one line of which is free from the gravest critical blemish, and which, but for the solemnity of the subject, would be universally condemned as monstrous and absurd. In another equally popular hymn, he has a stanza commencing with—"Return, O holy Dove, return"—against which there is a charge much more serious than any ordinary fault in defiance of the canons of criticism. The search for beautiful and correct hymns is often the weary and fruitless labour of weeks; and even the store collected in a year would be a meagre harvest. What are wanted are not technical distinctions of doctrine set forth in rhyme, or expositions of mysterious truth, or effusions of earthly affection, or meaningless rhapsodies, or poetical fables, or sentimental soliloquies, or extravagant and morbid declamation, or sermons in metre. We earnestly want Christian devotional praise, simple in its style, purely scriptural in thought, not ambitious in its tone, and of such a nature as shall enlist and draw out all the sympathies of the most uneducated, and yet offend not the cultivated taste of the most learned. This can be accomplished in *devotion*, while it may often be unattainable in *doctrine*. In the infinite distance between the worshippers and God, all the distinctions of human learning and accomplishment are lost, so that the child and the philosopher kneel side by side, and occupy the same position in reference to the Omniscient. It is not so in matters of instruction and doctrine, for the wise may expatiate in a field of knowledge and contemplation, which the simple may be unable to appreciate, and incapable to understand. In the cry for mercy—in the thanksgiving for deliverance—in the unburdening of the heart to God—in the aspiration for greater love, and a

greater likeness to our Lord, every voice can join, and every diversity of gift and attainment can sympathise.

There are some passages of Scripture not yet wedded to verse, which are peculiarly suggestive and valuable in public devotion. Such, for instance, is the contrast instituted so eloquently in Hebrews xii. 18, &c., between the spirit of the Law, and the spirit and privileges of the Gospel. It is worthy of every attempt to secure it for the service of praise.

We are not come to Sinai's height,  
The mount of dread renown,  
That burned and trembled with affright,  
When Israel's God came down ;

But we are come to Zion hill,  
The Lord's serene abode,  
The glorious city peopled still  
By countless hosts of God.

Our lives with Christ in God are hid,  
The Judge of great and small,  
With just men's souls from trial freed,  
And now made perfect all.

We're come one family to be  
With saints and angels blest,  
No aliens to their love are we,  
Though still we long for rest.

Then turn no more to Sinai's brow,  
But look to Zion's Lord ;  
His saints are our companions now,  
His angels are our guard.

It is doubtful whether we have any hymn at present setting forth the power and triumph of Faith. What subject so interesting and so vital!

Faith is the saving gift of God,  
The contrite heart's relief,  
And thus we pray, Lord, we believe ;  
Help Thou our unbelief.

Increase our faith, that more and more  
Thy likeness we may bear,  
Abounding in the grace that gives  
Reality to prayer.

Faith vanquishes the love of sin,  
Inspires the love of God,  
Sees Him who is invisible,  
And owns His chastening rod.

Faith purifies the guilty heart,  
Pursues its work by love ;  
Faith overcomes the world itself,  
And claims a home above.

Faith trusts our Father's love and power,  
Holds fast whate'er He saith,  
From present pain sees future good,  
And triumphs even in death.

O dwell within our hearts by faith,  
Direct our steps aright,  
For, Lord, we walk the way to heaven  
By faith, and not by sight.

We have also no hymn specially appropriate to the celebration of baptism. This want should be most carefully attended to, for, in the congregation, the solemnity and practical impressiveness of the sacrament are certainly impaired by incongruous psalmody.

A little child the Saviour came,  
The Mighty God was still His name;  
And angels worshipped as He lay,  
The seeming infant of a day.

He, who a little child began  
The life divine to shew to man,  
Proclaims from heaven the message free—  
Let little children come to Me!

We bring them, Lord, and with the sign  
Of sprinkled water, name them Thine;  
Do Thou their souls with health endow,  
Baptize them with Thy Spirit now.

O give Thine angels charge, good Lord,  
Them ever in Thy way to guard;  
Thy blessing on their lives command,  
And write their names upon Thine hand.

O Thou, who by an infant's tongue  
Canst hear Thy perfect glory sung,  
May these, with all the heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is of great importance that the hymns be of varied metres. By this means the music of the sanctuary will be indirectly but materially improved. And I would urge the adoption of a stanza in some instances that would occupy those common metre tunes which repeat the fourth line. The repetition is often grotesque and unmeaning, but a fifth line

should be provided for these melodies. The stanza is by no means clumsy, and improves upon acquaintance. For example—

Fountain of mercy, God of love,  
Thee all Thy works declare;  
The varied seasons, as they move,  
A glorious burden bear,  
And sing Thy constant care.

The spring's sweet incense, Lord, was Thine,  
The plants in beauty grew,  
Thou gavest summer suns to shine,  
And with each evening new  
The cool refreshing dew. &c.

Before laying down my pen and saying farewell to these Notes, which have occupied many a pleasant hour, and cheered many a studious evening, I transcribe a hymn which a very dear friend will recognise:—

Beautiful upon the mountain  
Are the feet of those who sing—  
Welcome to the living Fountain,  
And the peace of Zion's King.

Fairer far than earthly stranger  
Art Thou, Saviour King, above;  
Present still in every danger,  
Breathing safety, peace, and love.

Ah! these feet for us were wounded,  
Torn and scarred that placid brow;  
Faint from pain that voice once sounded,  
'Tis like many waters now.

Jesus, Lord, once meek and lowly,  
Bearing all our sin and woe,  
Like Thee, make us pure and holy;  
Faith and meekness, Lord, bestow.

When the sky with tempest shrouded  
On our pathway seems to frown,  
Sweet the glimpse of heaven, unclouded,  
Through the darkness glancing down;

Sweeter far when trouble's o'er us,  
And our hope and comfort cease,  
Light of God, Thou shin'st before us,  
Kindling in our bosoms peace.



















